PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FIFTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 2003–04

COMPRISING PERIOD
5 January—22 January 2004

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5 January 2004

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 5 January 2004

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Energy

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Ms Patricia Hewitt): On 1 December 2003, *Official Report*, cols 50–51WS, I informed the House that, following a request from British Energy, I was temporarily increasing the maximum amount available to the company under the Government's credit facility to £275 million. The increase was subject to the condition that it was limited to the period prior to the expected receipt of the proceeds from the sale of the company's interest in Amergen, or 22 February 2004, if earlier, whereafter it would be reduced to £200 million.

This is the first opportunity I have had to inform the House that British Energy announced on 23 December it had completed, and received the proceeds from, the sale of its interest in Amergen. Accordingly, the maximum amount available to the company under the facility has been reduced back to £200 million. Subject to the conditions of the restructuring, the facility will continue to be available to the company while the restructuring is agreed.

TREASURY

Equitable Life

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly): Lord Penrose delivered the report of his inquiry into Equitable Life on 23 December. The Treasury and its legal advisers and a limited number of people at the FSA are now reviewing the contents of the report. Subject to these discussions, it is the Treasury's intention to publish the report in full as soon as possible. Further details will be announced in due course.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Iran Earthquake

The Secretary of State for International Development (Hilary Benn): On 26 December 2003, at 1.57 am Greenwich Mean Time (5.27 am local time) a powerful earthquake, of magnitude 6.7 on the Richter scale, struck Kerman Province in south eastern Iran. The epicentre was near to the city of Bam. The earthquake hit the city while people were sleeping and the resultant human tragedy has been immense. The Government of Iran now estimate that between 30,000 and 32,000-people have lost their lives. Some 16,000 suffered injuries and 70,000 have been left homeless.

The Iranian Government has long experience of dealing with earthquakes and other natural disasters, but the sheer scale of this disaster meant that it welcomed international assistance. The situation was compounded by the fact that many of the city officials in Bam were themselves killed during the earthquake.

The first priority was search and rescue support for those still trapped in the rubble, and the provision of medical care for the injured. With Bam's only surviving hospital completely overwhelmed, the injured were flown to Kerman, 125 miles away, where they were stabilised before being flown on to Tehran and Isfahan. Providing shelter for those facing the freezing desert night was also critical. Water and electricity supplies took a while to be restored, so some local people were relying on open fires, in low winter temperatures. The Iranian authorities mobilised 20,000 volunteers for the relief effort and the Iranian Red Crescent treated approximately 30,000 casualties in the first four days, of which 10,000 were evacuated to receive tertiary care in seven other centres in Iran. The United Nations report that food and water supply is now adequate at this stage and that health needs are being addressed.

The United Kingdom played its part in responding quickly to the tragedy. In London, DFID opened its emergency crisis co-ordination room on the morning the earthquake happened, from where staff helped to co-ordinate efforts on the ground, liaise with other international relief organisations and worked with the Iranian Government and the British Embassy in Tehran to ensure that humanitarian assistance was delivered as quickly as possible. The Foreign Secretary spoke to the Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, on the afternoon of 26 December, to express his deep condolences at the loss of so many Iranian people in the earthquake and to offer the Iranian Government the services of specialised search and rescue teams to help in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

On 27 December, the day after the earthquake, 68 search and rescue specialists from the UK landed in Kerman on a DFID-organised charter flight from Stansted. The team, comprising UK fire service teams, specialists from British non-governmental organisations including the International Rescue Corps, Canis, Rapid and Bird, and four staff from DFID, took with them sniffer dogs and thermal imaging equipment. They were amongst the first international teams to reach Bam. The search and rescue phase has now come to a close and the UK teams have returned home. The United Nations report that the collective efforts of the Iranian and international search and rescue teams saved approximately 1,000 lives.

In addition to the immediate search and rescue effort, DFID immediately committed £150,000 towards the International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent appeal for shelter, heating and water purification equipment and on 29 December organised an airlift of 450 winter tents and other shelter materials, from DFID's warehouse, for distribution by the Iranian Red Crescent. We also leased two Antonov 12 cargo aircraft and put them at the disposal of the Government of Iran for the first few days to assist in maintaining the flow of relief items from congested airports to the areas where they are most needed. Also, following an urgent appeal from the World Health Organisation, DFID allocated £59,000 for the immediate purchase of 20,000 doses of tetanus vaccine, to be donated to the Ministry of Health and the Iranian Red Crescent. To date, in total, we have contributed some £900,000, including the

UK share (approximately £280,000) of the European Community commitment towards the international relief effort. DFID is maintaining a presence in the country to look at potential further help in the light of assessments currently underway.

The Government of Iran has asked the United Nations to develop and launch a Flash appeal. It will address the relief, recovery and early rehabilitation needs of those affected by the disaster and cover a period of three months. The Flash appeal is expected to be launched, in Tehran, on 8 January 2004.

I want to pay tribute to the professionalism and dedication of the teams from Britain and Iran, and from other nations, that immediately responded to the call for help. The preparedness of the British teams meant that the UK was able to react as soon as news of the earthquake began to reach us. I am also grateful for the excellent assistance provided by the British Embassy in Tehran in facilitating and supporting the teams during this period. Since the start of the crisis DFID has made available its situation reports on the DFID website. A copy of the latest report will also be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Helping the people of Bam has become a genuinely global effort, with assistance pouring in from all around the world. One thousand, six hundred international search and rescue, health and relief personnel drawn from 44 countries operated in the disaster area. Since the earthquake, the UN in Bam and Kerman has registered 1,400 flights carrying relief teams and emergency supplies. At moments of great human need like this, the international community must do all that it can to help. It is notable that over 50 countries are doing so, including significant commitments from the Gulf Co-operation Council for reconstruction.

Finally, I am sure that the House will wish to express its heartfelt condolences to the people of Bam and of Iran on the terrible tragedy that they have suffered. Our thoughts are with them.

Written Ministerial Statements

Tuesday 6 January 2004

DEFENCE

Ground Based Air Defence

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mr. Adam Ingram): The Defence Procurement Agency has agreed contracts with European Aeronautic Defence Systems and Lockheed Martin for a three-year competitive assessment phase for the Ground Based Air Defence phase 1 programme.

The contracts will pave the way for low-risk incremental introduction of enhanced command and control capability to our GBAD forces as well as providing them with world-class situational awareness in the joint battlespace management environment. This capability will provide interoperability within the joint UK forces and with all of our principal allies. The combined value of the contracts is around £85 million and the work will be conducted in the UK, headed from offices in Havant and Bristol, with a significant proportion being sub-contracted to MBDA missile systems at Stevenage and Thales Air Defence Ltd in Belfast. The GBAD investment will not only start a process of considerable networked enabled capability enhancement, but will support a wide variety of highly skilled jobs within the UK.

ECHR Judgments—Courts Martial

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): On 16 December 2003 the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment in the cases of Cooper and Grieves. The two cases concerned whether trial by court martial in the United Kingdom—under the system in place since the coming into force of the 1996 Armed Forces Act—was compatible with article 6.1 of the Convention.

This statement sets out the main findings of the Court and future conduct of courts martial.

Mr. Cooper was a serving member of the Royal Air Force (RAF). On 18 February 1998 he was convicted of theft by an Air Force district court martial (DCM). He was sentenced to 56 days' imprisonment, to be reduced to the ranks and dismissed from the service. The DCM comprised a permanent president, two other officers lower in rank and a civilian judge advocate.

On 3 April 1998 the Reviewing Authority, having received advice from the Advocate General, upheld the DCM's finding and sentence. The applicant appealed unsuccessfully to the Appeal Court (CMAC).

The applicant took the case to the European Court, basing his case mainly on a decision of the European Court in *Morris* v. *UK (2002)* that courts martial were non-compliant in certain respects relating to their composition and the practice of post-trial review (under which a conviction may be quashed or sentence reduced by a service reviewing authority). In *Cooper* v. *the United Kingdom*, the Court unanimously overturned its decision in *Morris* and held that there had been no violation of article 6.1 (right to a fair hearing and to an independent and impartial tribunal) of the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Grieves was a member of the Royal Navy. On 18 June 1998 he was convicted by a Royal Navy court martial of wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, reduced in rank, dismissed from the service and ordered to pay £700 in compensation. The court martial comprised a president (a Royal Navy captain), four naval officers and a judge advocate, who was a serving naval officer and barrister.

On 29 September 1998 the Admiralty Board, having received advice from the Judge Advocate of the Fleet (JAF), upheld the court martial's finding and sentence. The applicant appealed unsuccessfully to the CMAC.

Mr. Grieves took his case to the European Court. Part of his case was based on *Morris*. In addition he argued that the use of a serving naval officer as the judge advocate was non-compliant (in Army and RAF courts martial the judge advocates are civilians). In *Grieves* v. *the United Kingdom* the Court, as in *Cooper*, rejected the arguments based on *Morris*, but concluded that the use of serving naval officers as judge advocates in the Royal Navy did not provide a strong guarantee of the independence of naval courts martial. It thus held unanimously that there had been a violation of article 6§ 1. Under Article 41 (just satisfaction), the Court did not award the applicant any damages, but awarded him 8,000 euros for costs and expenses, less the amount received in legal aid.

The system of discipline within the armed forces is a vital contribution to their operational effectiveness and their success, to which this House has so often paid tribute. It is clearly welcome that the European Court has ruled that, as a whole, the service court martial system with its safeguards to guarantee its independence and impartiality is compliant with the ECHR. It is disappointing that the Court concluded on the more limited point in the case of Mr. Grieves that there was a violation under article 6. As explained already this does not affect Army or RAF courts martial where the judge advocates are civilians.

We are reviewing the implications of the details of judgment as a matter of urgency. On the issue of the appointment of uniformed judge advocates we have already concluded that their use should cease with immediate effect. Following legal advice, we have concluded that the judgment also requires the amendment of existing legislation to change the arrangements for the appointment of judge advocates in naval proceedings, as these appointments are made by a serving naval officer. We will shortly be putting a remedial order before both Houses for this purpose under section 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998. We aim to cause the minimum disruption to courts martial already scheduled in the new year, though some delay may be inevitable.

TREASURY

Citizen Information Project

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Paul Boateng): The Registrar General for England and Wales will announce later today that he is leading the next stage of development work for a UK population register, which will inform a further decision by Ministers in 2005 on whether this work should proceed to implementation.

A population register would become, for the public sector, the prime source of address and other core contact information relating to people usually resident in the UK. The development would pave the way for more responsive and personalised public services, by supporting joined-up delivery and more efficient and effective transaction and back office services.

A critical consideration in developing plans for a population register will be the protection of individual privacy. To that end, if a population register were implemented, individuals would be able to see the contact details held on them and to know which parts of government were accessing this information.

The work will build on a feasibility study that reported to Ministers in June. The Registrar General will place an information note summarising the feasibility study on the Office for National Statistics and General Register Office website. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The project team will continue to work closely with other Government Departments, the devolved Administrations, agencies and local authorities.

HEALTH

HFEA Code of Practice

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Miss Melanie Johnson): The new edition of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's code of practice for infertility clinics has been approved and laid before Parliament today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Written Ministerial Statements

Wednesday 7 January 2004

NORTHERN IRELAND

Independent Monitoring Commission

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Paul Murphy): The Government have today exchanged letters with the Irish Government to bring the agreement establishing the Independent Monitoring Commission into force. The final draft of the agreement was placed in the Library of the House on 4 September 2003. Following signature on 25 November 2003 the agreement was published as Command Paper Cm 6068 and laid before Parliament on 3 December 2003 in accordance with the Ponsonby "rule".

Both Governments have been committed to doing all they can to ensure that the Commission can begin its work as early as possible. We are confident that in agreeing an early date for entry into force with the Irish Government—before the 21 days required by the Ponsonby "rule" have elapsed—we have acted with the will of the House.

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): Following the expiry of the call-out Order made last January, I am informing the House that a new Order has been made under the Reserve Forces Act 1996 so that reservists may continue to be called out into service to support operations in Iraq. The new Order is effective until 6 January 2005.

Some 8,500 reservists were called out and accepted into service under the Order made last year. The proportion of reservists deployed with the UK force in theatre is currently just under 20 per cent. but this is expected to reduce to just over 10 per cent. during the course of the year. The next tranche of reservists, involving some 1,100 personnel, will shortly be called out for mobilisation and then deployed in early April where the majority will complete six month tours. We will continue to keep the size and mix of forces in theatre under careful review. We are very appreciative of the continuing support and commitment shown by both reservists and their employers.

CABINET OFFICE

Civil Contingencies Bill

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Douglas Alexander): I am today publishing the "Government's response to the report of the Joint Committee on the draft Civil Contingencies Bill (incorporating the Government's response to the House of Commons Defence Committee on the draft Civil Contingencies Bill)" (Cm 6078).

The Government are grateful for the contribution of the Joint Committee and the Defence Committee to the development of the thinking on the draft Bill as set out in their reports of 2 July and 28 November. We have considered in detail the recommendations put forward. Copies of the Government's response are available in the Libraries of both Houses and can also be viewed on the UK Resilience website http://www.ukresilience.info/

I am also today publishing the Cabinet Office report on The Government's Response to the Public Consultation on the Draft Civil Contingencies Bill, that was carried out last summer from 19 June until 11 September. This is also available in the Libraries of both Houses and can be viewed at http://www.ukresilience.info/

Written Ministerial Statements

Thursday 8 January 2004

DEFENCE

Duke of York's Royal Military School and Queen Victoria School

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): The Quinquennial review into the Duke of York's Royal Military School and Queen Victoria School has been discontinued before the production of a report in view of the constraints imposed by the royal warrants underpinning both foundations that effectively ruled out the review team's main recommendations, which involved removing the schools from Government control. The review did, however, identify a number of issues for further study. These will be taken forward by the Adjutant-General's headquarters in conjunction with the chief executive or head of each school. In the meantime, the two schools will remain as agencies of the Ministry of Defence.

HOME DEPARTMENT

L21A1 Baton Round

The Minister for Crime Reduction, Policing and Community Safety (Ms Hazel Blears): I have placed in the Library of the House a statement by the Defence Scientific Advisory Council (DSAC) on the ricochet potential of the L21A1 baton round. This baton round is used as a less lethal option by the police and the Army.

The Ministry of Defence has carried out research on the post-ricochet trajectories and kinetic energy of baton rounds. The Sub-Committee, Defence Scientific Advisory Council has assessed the medical implications of the ricochets and has made a statement.

The DSAC statement concluded that the experimental studies and analysis undertaken were an acceptable technical approach to the prediction of the risks.

DSAC has recommended:

Users should be made aware that L21A1 baton rounds can ricochet in some circumstances with high energy, and that the presence of obstacles and of personnel other than the intended target should form part of their risk assessment in the decision to fire the weapon;

A desire for a reduction of the ricochet potential should be stated in the research and operational requirements of future kinetic energy weapon systems, and be evaluated experimentally.

The Association of Chief Police Officers tell me that police firearms training addresses the ricochet potential of ammunition used by the police service. However, in order to ensure that this issue is specifically addressed, the results of these studies will be brought to the attention of persons responsible for firearms training in all forces throughout the United Kingdom. Current Army training on the use of baton rounds already addresses the issue of ricochet potential.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NATO Parliamentary Assembly

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Jack Straw): The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch) has replaced the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) as a member of the United Kingdom delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small Business

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Nigel Griffiths): The Small Business Service (SBS) is today publishing a Government action plan for small business. It builds on existing Government support for small business, marshalling the whole of government behind the small business agenda. I am placing copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

In December 2002, the SBS published *Small Business and Government—The Way Forward*—a strategic framework for a Government-wide approach to helping small businesses based around seven core themes: building an enterprise culture; encouraging a more dynamic start-up market; building the capability for small business growth; improving access to finance for small businesses; encouraging more enterprise in disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups; improving small businesses' experience of Government services; and developing better regulation and policy. These themes were identified as key drivers for economic growth, improved productivity and enterprise for all.

Since then, partners at national, regional and local level have worked together using the strategic framework to develop a set of practical actions focused on improving policy and delivery as it affects small business.

Actions identified in the plan, include:

Consideration being given to extending the concept of common commencement dates for legislative and regulatory changes subject to the results of the employment law pilot now underway. Government will consult business on the priority areas and preferred dates;

A review of the routes off benefits into self-employment to establish if more can be done to encourage and facilitate moves into self employment;

The launch of a "core offer" for start-ups defining the service that all start-up businesses, wherever they are located, can expect;

Completion of the establishment of a Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship;

The publication of a "no nonsense guide" to access to finance for small businesses;

A second phase of the Government's Phoenix Fund, to encourage specialist business support and entrepreneurship in disadvantaged areas;

The development of a small business procurement concordat, to be signed by public sector bodies; and

Further work to improve the coherence, accessibility and quality of Government services for small businesses building on the success of the cross-Government www.businesslink.gov.uk portal available since November 2003.

Implementation of the Action Plan will require the involvement of a wide range of Government Departments and agencies and delivery partners. A web-based implementation programme is being made available at www.sbs.gov.uk setting out milestones and target dates for the implementation of the new actions. It will be updated on a regular basis to show the progress that is being made.

Gas Quality

The Minister for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services (Mr. Stephen Timms): My predecessor, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), launched a three-phase strategy on 5 June 2003 to look at the issue of gas quality, as the UK becomes increasingly import dependent. Phase one was a scoping study on whether there would be a gas quality problem, in particular but not exclusively in relation to the Wobbe number. ILEX Energy Ltd was appointed to take this work forward. This study is now complete and an edited version of this report, without commercially sensitive information, is available on the DTI/Energy Website [www.dti.gov.uk/energy shtml/domestic_markets/gas_market/index]

ILEX approached this study by carrying out a supply-demand analysis and identifying the main sources of gas required to meet the forecast demand. An assessment was then made of the likely quality of the various sources of imported gas and the implications of those gas supplies for Great Britain's entry terminals. ILEX had a number of meetings with future and potential future suppliers to gather quantitative data on the likely quality of gas from new import sources. These data, much of which are commercially sensitive, will be used by DTI, HSE and Ofgem to inform this exercise.

During Phase 1 the DTI, HSE and Ofgem held a workshop to engage industry at the early stages of this exercise. The workshop was successful in providing a forum for industry to discuss gas quality issues.

ILEX's work confirms that the future Wobbe[1] specification of much gas imported into the UK before processing, is likely to fall outside the current upper Wobbe limit in the Gas Safety Management Regulations (GSMR). The UK's increasing dependence on imported gas does therefore raise the question whether the current upper Wobbe limit should be increased.

In the light of this result I have asked my officials to proceed with phase 2. Phase 2 will be a tripartite (DTI, HSE, Ofgem) consultation on the appropriate policy response. As my predecessor said, our broad policy options appear to be: the default option, to retain the current Wobbe limit (this would avoid the need to remove household appliances, but it would have the disadvantage of limiting UK access to the global gas market); or to change the current Wobbe limit (this would require the identification and removal of non-compliant gas appliances, but with an advantage in terms of facilitating gas imports).

My officials, together with HSE and Ofgem, will be working over the next months to prepare the ground for a consultation exercise on the policy option. My officials are also in discussion with the European Commission and representatives of the gas industry in the EU, about the work being carried out at the EU level on gas quality and the interaction with the present exercise.

I shall make a further statement to the House in due course to announce the forthcoming public consultation document. My Department would propose to hold a further workshop at that time.

This exercise has been developed by the DTI as a member of the Sustainable Energy Policy Network (SEPN), which is working to deliver the Energy White Paper "Our Energy Future—creating a low carbon economy".

[1] The Wobbe Number represents a measure of the heat release when a gas is burned at constant gas supply pressure. The Wobbe limit range in The Gas Safety Management Regulations is between 47.20 MJ/cubic metre and 51.41 MJ/cubic metre.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CDC

The Secretary of State for International Development (Hilary Benn): On 27 November 2002, the then Secretary of State for International Development made a written statement to the House on the plans to reorganise CDC. This set out how CDC was to be reorganised into two separate organisations; an investment company and a new management company. I am now submitting a further written statement to inform the House on how these plans are being carried through.

The purpose of the reorganisation of CDC is to maximise the creation and long-term growth of viable businesses in poorer developing countries, by making responsible investments and mobilising private capital alongside public funds. These objectives, which were set out in the 1997 and 2000 White Papers on International Development, remain unchanged.

CDC's business now focuses on regions (South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa) and sectors where more investment is needed in order to help meet the Millennium Development Goals. It follows a set of pioneering responsible business principles that commit it to ethical, environmental and social best practice. CDC is also subject to an Investment Policy, which sets out the countries (the "CDC Universe") in which it may invest. The Policy includes two targets; that 70 per cent. of new CDC investment should be made in poorer developing countries, and that 50 per cent. of new investments should be in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

In order to improve CDC's performance and enhance the mobilisation of private investment in poorer developing countries, I have recently approved a reorganisation proposal on behalf of the Government.

CDC is to be separated into two corporate entities and a family of Funds.

Firstly, an investment company, which will continue to be named CDC and will be wholly-owned by the Government, will hold the existing and future cash and investment assets of CDC and its subsidiaries. This company will be responsible for ensuring that our capital is used in accordance with the investment policy. Secondly, a new independent management company, to be known as Actis, will be formed as a limited liability partnership between its management and staff (who will together have majority control) and the Government. Actis will raise and invest capital from CDC, from other development finance institutions and from private investors. It will follow responsible business principles and provide leadership and supervision for a family of Funds,

The Funds will focus on Africa, South Asia, power, and SMEs, with smaller funds for China and Malaysia. Each will be managed by a dedicated fund management subsidiary of Actis or on a joint venture basis, and will be run on a commercial basis in order to attract capital from private investors and development finance institutions. This structure of a management company and a family of Funds is an accepted norm in the international fund management industry. It will allow Actis to manage Funds with a range of objectives, from strongly developmental to fully commercial, according to the requirements of target markets and the objectives and return requirements of investors including CDC.

This dual company approach will help to establish Actis as an independent investment manager specialising in developing country markets, especially the poorer ones. It will also enable CDC, after an initial five year contract with Actis, to select its future investment manager(s) and thereby strengthen CDC's and the Government's ability to hold Actis and any other investment managers to their targets.

I have agreed to the appointment of Malcolm Williamson as Chair of the Board of the new CDC. He has an admirable track record in the banking and financial sector and I expect that he will take up this new position within the next few weeks when the two new companies are formally established. The current Chair of CDC, Lord Cairns, has agreed to become Chair of Actis. I am very pleased that two such experienced and highly qualified professionals will be leading the new companies.

I am writing to the Chair and members of the Select Committee on International Development about these changes. Later today, I will be making a public announcement about the new arrangements.

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 12 January 2004

HOME DEPARTMENT

Investors Scheme

The Minister for Citizenship and Immigration (Beverley Hughes): The investor category of the immigration rules was introduced on 1 October 1994 for investors who wish to come to the UK to invest £1 million. This must include a £750,000 investment in UK Government bonds, or in share or loan capital in active and trading UK registered companies as set out within the immigration rules. At present the UK attracts around 26 investors to the UK a year, providing around £26 million of investment in the UK a year.

As part of the Government's approach to sensible, managed migration where it is in the UK's economic interest, we are revising this category in the light of the experience of other countries who have similar investment routes. The Government recognises that it is important to have effective opportunities for major investors and that the category could be improved to attract more high net worth migrants to come to the UK.

We have decided to allow overseas investors in future to use loaned money from an authorised financial institution (those regulated by the Financial Services Authority) where the potential investor has a personal net worth of £2 million. In Canada, similar changes were made to their investors category resulting in an increase in investors moving to Canada. The UK hopes to emulate this success.

Investors whose funds are tied up in illiquid assets and investors who prefer to invest their own money in higher interest investment products will now be able to apply to enter the UK as a result of these changes.

The revised arrangements for the investors route will be reflected in the immigration rules on 13 January 2004.

Crime Victims (Compensation and Support)

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Blunkett): I am today publishing a consultation paper entitled "Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime". This sets out proposals to provide a wider range of support for victims of crime and to amend the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

We are determined to deliver a better deal for victims and witnesses and to provide a wider package of support. The consultation paper proposes the establishment of a new victims fund in England and Wales to provide a broader and more effective range of services for victims and witnesses. Part of the Fund will be used for voluntary sector support to victims.

Money for the fund will come principally from making offenders pay more towards compensation and support for victims through placing a surcharge on criminal convictions and fixed penalty notices for criminal offences. It will also come from resources released from changes to the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

The paper also asks for views on how best to compensate workers who are injured in the course of duty more fairly and more efficiently.

These changes are expected to release some £25 million to provide a wider range of services for victims of crime.

We want compensation to victims to be targeted in the right way, and to come from the most appropriate sources. We believe that the proposals set out in the consultation paper should help us achieve that. They will build on the measures set out in the National Strategy for Victims and Witnesses, published last year.

We are also committed to ensuring that the criminal injuries compensation scheme is administered as efficiently and cost-effective as it possibly can be and are taking forward measures to achieve this.

We welcome comments on all the proposals and ideas set out in the consultation paper. We will consider all responses carefully. Subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise, we propose to legislate to make the changes, where necessary, through amendments to the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill currently before Parliament.

DEFENCE

Civil Contingency Reaction Forces

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mr. Adam Ingram): Civil contingency reaction forces (CCRFs) achieved full operating capability by 31 December 2003 as planned. Fourteen CCRFs are now available to support the civil authorities if they ask for military assistance.

The emergency services would lead on the response to any incident and can call on a range of support, which includes the specially trained CCRFs as required. A programme of exercises between local CCRFs and emergency services began in 2003 to test how they would work together in an emergency. CCRFs will provide general duties support consistent with the established military aid framework, and the normal Ministry of Defence command structure.

It is important to remember that CCRFs are just one of the ways in which the armed forces can provide support, and that support itself would be part of a much wider response.

Veterans Initiative Education Programme

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): I am pleased to announce the launch today of a new collaborative education programme called "Their Past Your Future" across the United Kingdom. I am grateful to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Skills and for Culture, Media and Sport for their enthusiastic support for this project, all the funding for which is being provided by the national lottery new opportunities fund. The programme will enable young people at school the opportunity to research and understand the

role played by service veterans and civilian groups in ensuring our national security and survival. It will focus on the important Second World War commemorative events taking place in 2004–05, but is intended to develop into a long-term project recognising the importance of peace and reconciliation as well as conflict. A website will provide information about the programme and ways of linking up veterans and eye-witnesses with schools so that children can draw on those memories and experiences for their own understanding. There will be resources for schools to use in the citizenship and history curricula and this will also stretch out into other subject areas such as English and Geography. Opportunities for young people to participate in commemorations at home and abroad are also central to this programme. As part of this last element, there will be an initial research-based competition available with a prize of participation in the D-Day commemorations in June 2004.

This programme is a good example of collaboration on veterans-related issues across the official and voluntary sectors. It was developed as part of the veterans initiative but the Imperial War Museum will lead this project. Key partners include the Department for Education and Skills, the Confederation of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations, the Royal British Legion, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Service Museums as well as the Ministry of Defence.

As I said before, I am particularly pleased that the national lottery new opportunities fund has undertaken to provide funding and that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is also closely involved in the collaborative effort that is necessary for a project of this nature. This is an excellent example of lottery money being used for a good cause.

I hope that projects of this kind will help future generations to remember and understand the experiences and sacrifices of veterans of all types and their role in our nation's history. I also urge right hon. and hon. Members to make schools and colleges in their constituencies aware of this project.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Pension Credit

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr. Andrew Smith): I can now provide the third monthly progress report on the take-up of pension credit, which became payable on 6 October 2003.

There are now 2.12 million pensioner households (2.53 million individuals) being paid pension credit, including 60,000 new pension credit households (79,000 individuals) in December 2003. As at 31 December 2003, there are 1.44 million households (1.71 million individuals) now receiving more money as a result of the introduction of pension credit. The pension credit application line, at our four sites across the country, has received 1.84 million calls since it became operational on 7 April 2003 and 96 per cent. of calls have been answered within 30 seconds. The average Pension Credit award is £44.20 per week.

Our direct mail campaign is continuing, supported by a major advertising campaign on TV and in the press which began in September last year. We are continuing to work with organisations such as Help The Aged, Age Concern and Citizens Advice, amongst others, both at a national and local level, to encourage eligible people to take up their entitlement.

There is plenty of time for pensioners to apply for pension credit. To ensure that pensioners do not lose out, there is a twelve-month backdating provision until October of this year. This will allow applications to be backdated to October 2003, where entitlement exists, or to the date entitlement begins if this is later.

I am placing in the Library a report showing progress so far, including regional breakdowns of the number of pension credit households and numbers of pension credit awards in Parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain. Copies of the report are also available for hon. Members in the Vote Office.

I am also placing in the Library a summary of recent independent research which found high levels of customer satisfaction with the pension credit application line and with the application process overall.

TREASURY

Shipbuilders' Relief

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Healey): I am today confirming the abolition, in full and with immediate effect, of shipbuilders' relief.

Council Regulation (EC) No. 1540/98 which established new rules on aid to shipbuilding requires the phasing out of state operating aid within the community. The regulation specifically refers to commercial vessels and fishing vessels for export from the community and stipulates that state operating aid be abolished with effect from 31 December 2000. HM Customs and Excise will continue to honour claims for contracts signed on or before 31 December 2000, in respect of such vessels.

Shipbuilders' relief has additionally been payable in respect of warships and other fishing vessels. However, the purpose of EC Regulation 1540/98 was to bring an end to state operating aid in the Community and in order to comply with the spirit of the EC regulation and with state aid law, these other categories of vessel must also lose their eligibility, and will do so from today. Customs will therefore honour claims for contracts signed on or before 12 January 2004 in respect of such categories of vessel not explicitly included in the text of EC regulation 1540/98.

The Government believes that the best way to support a strong shipbuilding industry in the United Kingdom is not through providing such old-style operating subsidies but by promoting international competition and through support for enterprise, research and development, science and innovation and tackling skills needs.

The DTI has provided a £3 million grant to the Link Shipbuilding Research Project being led by the Shipbuilders' and Shiprepairers' Association. Launched in June 2001, this is a five-year project with total funding

of £6 million, which combines academic studies with master classes tailored to the needs of individual yards. The scheme is making good progress, and the yards involved have attributed recent improvements in business activity and productivity to the master classes.

To support skills development across the UK economy, the Government is setting up new councils to identify and help deliver the skills that employers need. The Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (SEMTA) Sector Skills Council, which covers the shipbuilding industry, has already been established. SEMTA is preparing a sector skills agreement which will identify the skill needs, priorities and scope for collective action by the employers it represents.

To further support skills and workforce development in shipbuilding staff, the Government is prepared to invest up to an additional £500,000 to support SEMTA on the implementation of its sector skills agreement, where it applies to shipbuilding. This additional funding will be conditional on the SEMTA sector skills agreement being approved by Government, and founded on the clear commitment to collaborative action from shipbuilding employers as well as unions and other stakeholders.

Written Ministerial Statements

Tuesday 13 January 2004

NORTHERN IRELAND

Priorities and Budget 2004–06

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Ian Pearson): Following consultation on the Government's Draft Priorities and Budget for Northern Ireland which was launched on 6 October 2003, I am today setting out the Government's priorities and spending plans for Northern Ireland Departments for the next two years 2004–05 to 2005–06.

When devolution was suspended in Northern Ireland we pledged that we would work tirelessly to rebuild trust across the political parties and bring about an early restoration of devolved Government. We have, and we will continue to work towards that aim. However, for as long as direct rule continues we are determined to govern in an open and fair way to improve the delivery of public services for the people of Northern Ireland in ways that meet their needs and expectations.

The Priorities and Budget which we are publishing today builds on the progress made by the Northern Ireland Executive under devolution and continued by Northern Ireland Ministerial Team since devolution was suspended. It is our view that the policies and priorities identified in the former Executive's Draft Programme for Government in September 2002, and continued in the "Building on Progress Priorities and Plans" which I announced in December 2002, remain relevant in the context of the economic and social challenges facing Northern Ireland. For this reason we have retained the five priorities as the basis for our work over the coming year.

The continuing priorities for delivery of public services in Northern Ireland therefore are:

Growing as a community;

Working for a healthier people;

Investing in education and skills;

Securing a competitive economy; and

Developing North/South, East/West and International Relations.

We want to ensure that the four key cross cutting themes announced by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his statement on "Progress and Priorities" in June last year are fully reflected in all aspects of our work. These themes are:

(i) Tackling sectarianism, community division and disadvantage;

(ii) Equality, rights and victims;

(iii) Improving service delivery; and

(iv) Reinvestment and reform.

These priorities and themes are central to the work of Government in Northern Ireland and as such they are reflected in, and permeate through, all aspects of the Priorities and Budget we are announcing today.

Sectarianism and inter community conflict act as barriers to social and economic growth and recovery and as a disincentive to investment. Building trust and confidence between and within communities, promoting equality of opportunity and justice, for all, developing social capital and tackling sectarianism are key priorities for us.

Tackling poverty and social exclusion continues to be a key priority for us. Under devolution the former Executive adopted New Targeting Social Need as its strategic approach to combating poverty and committed to evaluating the effectiveness of this approach. This review is now complete and we will soon publish and consult on proposals for future policy and strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion.

We are committed to working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, which plays a vital role in community development and in helping to promote social inclusion, tackle disadvantage and community division. We will therefore continue to support and facilitate better partnership working with the sector.

In pursuing these priorities we will seek to work in partnership with social and economic partners and to harness actions within and across departments and agencies to achieve measurable improvements in equality, poverty and disadvantage and community cohesion. We will continue to promote respect for cultural diversity and community understanding through a broad range of policies and programmes.

We remain fully committed to driving forward the equality and human rights agenda, which was central to the work of the former Executive. Work will continue across departments and agencies to ensure that equality considerations are fully mainstreamed into policy development across Government, and that there is effective operation of the statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

In acknowledging our fundamental accountability to the people of Northern Ireland we recognise the importance of being able to demonstrate what is being achieved from the resources available to us. A particular focus of the Priorities and Budget we are announcing today is on improving the delivery of public services. We are committed to ensuring better public services for the people of Northern Ireland through improvements in the delivery of these services.

Last spring, departments published reform plans setting out priorities for reforming key services to improve the quality and delivery of services to the public. Those plans represented a useful first step, but the challenge now is not only to identify new ways of

improving service delivery through reform and modernisation but also to demonstrate how and when improvement has been achieved. For this reason we have selected a number of key targets in the Public Service Agreements which are of particular importance and which my Ministerial colleagues and I will review on a regular basis over the coming year and beyond. These key targets reflect the cross cutting themes underlying the Priorities and Budget and cover a number of key public services including Health, Education, Employment; the Environment, Roads and Transport and Economic development.

Turning specifically to the Budget, I am now in a position to confirm our plans for 2004–05 and 2005–06, building on the proposals we outlined in the Draft Budget which we launched in October last year. The key development is a clear shift of spending power from consumption to investment. This is a clear step to increase the drive for significant reforms in the way public services are delivered in Northern Ireland, so that we can do even more to promote reinvestment than we had planned up to now.

In the course of last year's national Spending Review, the Chancellor allocated significant additional resources to Northern Ireland for the period up to April 2006, and the region's share of the sustained additional provision for health in 2006–07 and 2007–08. This year the resources available to us remain essentially those allocated at that time, supplemented by local revenue and the use of the borrowing power available under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative as well as some £15 million for Northern Ireland announced in the Chancellor's pre-Budget report in December.

As I have indicated, improving the delivery of public services is a key focus of the Budget being announced today. We will do this by ensuring that the progress of reform and modernisation is accelerated so as to provide better public services, and by continuing to take forward the significant programme of infrastructure development initiated under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative. This means some significant downward pressure on administrative costs in departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

The budget allocations we are announcing today have been determined taking account of the level of revenue necessary to secure access to borrowing under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative. After taking account of the additional revenue from the introduction of rating of vacant property and the phasing out of industrial de-rating an increase of approximately 9 per cent. on the domestic regional rates and 3.3 per cent. in the non domestic sector is necessary. If we assume that district councils increase their domestic rates by around 6 per cent. this will mean an increase of around £35 per year—less than 70p a week—in the average domestic rates bill and will ensure the continuation of the infrastructure development necessary for our public services. The Strategic Investment Programme which I announced in February last year provided for spending on infrastructure development in excess of £2 billion. The continued access to borrowing, which has been secured through increased revenue from rates means that we can continue to maintain the momentum of the Strategic Investment Programme, the total value of which is now in excess of £2.7 billion.

The resources available to us over the next two years provide for an increase of nearly 14 per cent. on spending on services. This is a substantial allocation which will provide for sustained economic growth and development across all key public services. The budget allocations reflect our commitment to improve public services through sustained investment. Capital allocations for almost all of the key public services have been increased above the levels in the draft Budget.

In seeking to provide better service delivery a key objective of this budget is to ensure more resources are directed to front line services by reducing bureaucracy and increasing efficiency. The budget provides for a reduction in departmental administration costs for the majority of departments of around 2 per cent. for next year, with further reductions in 2005–06, compared with the draft Budget in October.

Health remains the Government's top priority in Northern Ireland. The Budget provides for a rise of more than 16 per cent. in spending on health over the next two years. This will enable investment in priority services such as renal, cancer and other critical care services and will provide for enhancement to community, primary and intermediate care services and services for the elderly and those with mental illnesses.

Spending on Education will increase by almost 11 per cent. over the Budget period. The increased resources will enable schools to build on the impressive educational achievements of pupils in Northern Ireland. It will also enable Government to address a number of pressing issues in the educational sector including the continuation of existing support measures for schools in interface areas which are being adversely affected by continuing community tension. The schools estate will benefit significantly from investment under the Strategic Investment Programme with projects in excess of £246 million being taken forward over the next two years.

The Budget provides for increased spending on Regional Development of more than 15 per cent. over the next two years. This reflects the substantial additional resources for investment in roads, water and transport infrastructure, including a number of major capital programmes, and Public Private Partnership schemes to the value of some £530 million.

In agreeing the Priorities and Budget we have sought to ensure that resources are allocated to key public services to secure continuation of the required infrastructure development, fundamental to the

effective delivery of key services such as Health, Education and Regional Development. At the same time we have sought to ensure that the planned allocations and the processes for managing them will secure the necessary improvements for better public services.

The Priorities and Budget fully reflect our determination to ensure that during this continuing period of suspension we will govern in an open and fair way to improve the delivery of public services for the people of Northern Ireland in ways that meet their needs and expectations.

I have placed copies of the "Priorities and Budget 2004–06" document in the Library.

CABINET OFFICE

Civil Service (Management Functions) Act 1992

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Douglas Alexander): Since the last report to Parliament, *Official Report*, 28 January 2003, column 34WS, new authorisations have been made to the Assets Recovery Agency and to the Chief Land Registrar, HM Land Registry from 20 February and 1 October 2003 respectively.

The authorisations were made subject to the condition that recipients comply with the provisions of the civil service management code as amended from time to time. Copies of the civil service management code are available in the Library of the House and electronically at http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/civilservice/managementcode/index.htm.

Written Ministerial Statements

Wednesday 14 January 2004

HEALTH

National Service Framework for Renal Services

The Secretary of State for Health (Dr. John Reid): I am today publishing "National Service Framework for Renal Services, Part One: Dialysis and Transplantation".

The national service framework (NSF) programme is a major part of our agenda to tackle health inequalities and to drive up standards across the National Health Service. Part one of this NSF covers dialysis and transplantation; and sets standards and identifies markers of good practice that will help the NHS, and its partners, to manage the demand for renal services, increase fairness of access, and improve choice and quality in dialysis and kidney transplantation.

This is an important part of our modernisation programme to improve renal dialysis and transplantation services over the next 10 years. The framework sets out five quality standards to provide a flexible, responsive service that provides patients with better access and choice. It identifies 30 markers of good practice drawn from national and international evidence. This NSF builds on the programme of modernisation set out in the NHS Plan and the national service frameworks for diabetes, coronary heart disease, older people, and children. It reflects the principles of empowering patients and frontline staff contained in the NHS Plan and "Shifting the Balance of Power", and of extending patient choice as set out in "Building on the Best: Choice, Responsiveness and Equity in the NHS" (Cm 6079).

This NSF complements "Saving Lives, Valuing Donors—A Transplant Framework for England" and supports our aim to increase the number of kidneys available for transplantation.

The five NSF standards for renal services set out a vision of a service that is equitable and integrated, and that provides people with the support they need to make individual choices and to manage their own condition.

The NSF for renal services sets out five steps for the NHS to take by 2006:

- use national data to support planning and to identify local priorities, including the needs of black and minority ethnic groups;
- continue to expand haemodialysis capacity;
- join the UK renal registry and take part in national audit;
- implement National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on home haemodialysis;
- implement forthcoming NICE guidance on immunosuppressive therapy for transplantation.

In addition we will establish five modernisation programmes to support the implementation and delivery of the NSF. These programmes are to:

- re-design the renal dialysis and transplantation workforce;
- re-engineer elective dialysis access surgery;
- re-design access to hospital (patient transport);
- re-design care plans to enable partnership and choice;
- re-design the built environment.

We will continue to work with doctors, nurses, allied healthcare professionals, NHS managers and people with renal failure to develop part two of the NSF concentrating on prevention of established renal failure, primary care and care towards the end of life.

Copies of "National Service Framework for Renal Services, Part One: Dialysis and Transplantation" have been placed in the Library.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

British-Irish Council Summit (St. Fagans)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs (Mr. Christopher Leslie): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister led the UK delegation and was accompanied by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs.

The Council noted the recent elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and looked forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, established under the agreement.

The main issue for discussion was indigenous, minority and lesser-used languages, and the Council has agreed a programme to take forward joint working in this area. I have placed a copy of the communiqué in the Libraries of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO)

The Minister for Crime Reduction, Policing and Community Safety (Ms Hazel Blears): I am announcing today that I have commissioned an end-to-end review of the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) and its business processes, including its role in the provision of information technology and communications services to the police.

PITO is a non-departmental public body established as a body corporate under the Police Act of 1997. PITO was to have been reviewed under the now superseded quinquennial arrangements. We now intend that the review will address itself primarily to an examination of how PITO delivers its organisational objectives of ICT provision to the police. Within that context the review will also examine the current structure of PITO, to determine whether it is appropriate to deliver the best possible provision of ICT to the police service and the criminal justice system.

The provision of high quality information and communications technology to the police and the criminal justice system is vital, not only to manage

efficiency throughout the system, but also to ensure officers are better equipped to deliver front-line policing. PITO has a key role to play and the purpose of this review is to look at how well its current structure supports that objective and to make recommendations for changes if necessary.

I have asked Robert McFarland to lead the review. He has previous experience of public sector reviews, having served on the review of the Crown Prosecution Service in 1998, and having led the review of the Forensic Science Service in 2002–03.

Streets Ahead Initiative

The Minister for Crime Reduction, Policing and Community Safety (Ms Hazel Blears): A copy of the Government's response to Streets Ahead—a report on the street crime initiative—has been placed in the House Library.

Eight Inspectorates undertook a joint inspection of the progress of the street crime initiative between October 2002 and April 2003. The resulting report—Streets Ahead—was published in July 2003. Copies of the report are also available in the House Library.

Home Detention Curfew Scheme (HDC)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Paul Goggins): I am today announcing a change to the home detention curfew scheme (HDC).

HDC has been in operation since 1999. It provides an effective and measured transition for offenders moving from custody into the community. Eligible prisoners are subject to a careful risk assessment before any decision is taken to grant them early release. Previous amendments to the scheme have balanced extensions to the period of early release with restrictions designed to maintain public confidence in the scheme as a whole. In April 2003 the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State announced an extension of HDC to a maximum of four and a half months. The extension was accompanied by the introduction of a presumption against release for prisoners convicted of certain serious offences—those which the Government consider cause the public particular concern.

Prisoners released under the HDC scheme serve the remainder of their custody period at home under electronic curfew, usually from 7pm to 7am. At present there are approximately 3,700 prisoners on electronic tag. The scheme is kept under constant review.

Public confidence in the scheme is essential. It is for this reason that the Home Secretary has already made it clear that offenders serving sentences for certain current offences and prisoners with any history of sexual offending must be considered unsuitable for release on HDC unless exceptional circumstances exist. This presumption against HDC will continue to apply.

A recent case has highlighted the fact that, in addition, there will be exceptional cases where an offender may be considered unsuitable for HDC even though he or she has not committed one of the offences which give rise to the presumption, if to grant HDC would undermine public confidence in the scheme. This will depend on the circumstances of the particular case.

The Home Secretary has decided that such exceptional cases should be referred to the Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service who will take the decision whether or not to grant HDC.

TRANSPORT

Urban Bus Challenge 2003

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Tony McNulty): I am pleased to announce today the results of the 2003 urban bus challenge competition. A total of £20 million has been awarded to 25 local authorities for 40 schemes which will provide improved local transport in deprived urban areas. This announcement brings to over £53 million the sum awarded under the urban bus challenge scheme, supporting a total of 106 projects. A list of the 2003 awards has been placed in the Library of the House.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Keith Hill): The Government have always been clear that county councils and other authorities with strategic planning expertise would play a key part in preparing draft revisions of regional spatial strategies and in their implementation. Draft planning policy statement 11, which we published for consultation in October, sets out in some detail how the county councils and these other authorities can assist the regional planning body, including exercising functions on behalf of that body within a partnership arrangement.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill already encourages regional planning bodies to enter into arrangements with county councils and these other authorities but it does not require them to do so. The Local Government Association, the County Councils Network and others have expressed concern that, without a guarantee of involvement for county councils on the face of the Bill, their role could be marginalised under the new arrangements.

I have discussed with the Association and the County Councils Network how we might secure in legislation our policy intention for the future role of county councils without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or providing opportunities for unreasonable delay or obstruction. I am pleased to announce to the House that, as a result of these discussions, we will be tabling an amendment to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill that is currently in the House of Lords. Whether or not the Bill is amended is ultimately a matter for that House to decide.

This amendment would require regional planning bodies to seek advice on the preparation, review and monitoring of the implementation of regional spatial strategies from county councils and other authorities with strategic planning expertise. They would in turn be under an obligation to provide advice, providing that their delivery of services was affected in some way. I

would also amend our draft planning policy statement 11 on regional planning to explain in more detail how this would work in practice.

The amendment would also allow regional planning bodies to enter into arrangements with counties, other authorities with strategic planning expertise and district councils to carry out functions on behalf of the regional planning body.

I am delighted that, in the light of this proposal, the Local Government Association and the County Councils Network have agreed to give their full support to making the new regional planning arrangements a success. I look forward to our promoting together a system that I believe will deliver better strategic plans for our regions in the years ahead.

Growth Areas Fund

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Yvette Cooper): "*Creating sustainable communities: Making it Happen: Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas*" published in July 2003 announced outline plans for a £164 million package for the three newer growth areas of Ashford, Milton Keynes-South Midlands, and London/Stansted/Cambridge. Commitments were made then to fund individual schemes to a total value of £88 million.

I am announcing today detailed allocations for a further £63 million from the £164 million package. This includes £11.5 million allocated to environmental projects in Ashford, Milton Keynes/South Midlands and London/Stansted/Cambridge to kick start the Government's long-term vision for green spaces. They will improve landscapes, country footpaths and valuable habitats in those areas. More than £50 million has been awarded to 18 other projects to provide key transport and economic infrastructure for three growth areas.

The flagship schemes announced today include the following green developments:

A completely new country park to be created on farmland at Coton, west of Cambridge, improving the quality of the green belt and providing a green buffer between Cambridge and the village of Coton.

A £1.5 million kickstart to the new River Nene Regional Park in Northamptonshire.

Three new areas of woodland and a new cycle path through the Forest of Marston Vale, improving poor quality land and providing green buffers between the growing towns of Bedford and Milton Keynes.

Protecting and improving valuable habitats, including chalk downland at Dunstable Downs, and fenland at Wicken, north of Cambridge.

New footpaths and bridges to improve access to the Lee Valley Regional Park in north-east London.

Key improvements to infrastructure announced today include:

The sum of £9.5 million for the London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area, bringing the total to over £20 million. New projects will provide access to new housing sites on Cambridge's southern fringe, and will fund design and preparation work for the Cambridge to Huntingdon guided bus, recently awarded £65 million by the Department for Transport.

Over £35 million for the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area. Flagship schemes include £10.6 million for the construction of a new access road and bridge to enable early delivery of 3,400 new homes in Wellingborough and £5 million for a new road at Bedford, which together with funding from the Department for Transport and English Partnerships will enable 3,450 to be provided which would not otherwise go ahead.

The sum of £2.8 million for schemes to support job creation and improve the urban environment in Corby, £1.7 million to improve the town centre in Aylesbury and £3 million to regenerate the historic Bletchley Park complex.

An additional £4.5 million to kick start the regeneration of Ashford town centre, on top of the £9 million announced in July, 2003.

A further £19.5 million has been set aside for further schemes in the London/Stansted/Cambridge corridor, details of which we will announce in April 2004.

Full details of the projects announced today will be available in the Libraries of both Houses.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Export Licence Applications (Iraq)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Bill Rammell): Following consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry recently approved further licences to export Military List Goods to Iraq. The arms embargo against Iraq remains in place under United Nations Security Council resolution 1483 (2003), with the exception of

"arms and other related material required by the (Coalition Provisional) Authority to serve the purposes of this and other related resolutions".

Accordingly, Her Majesty's Government consider it appropriate to grant exemptions for the export of:

(i) smoke grenades which are to be used by private security firms contracted to provide close protection for employees of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and

(ii) small arms ammunition which is to be provided to the Coalition Provisional Authority for use by the Ministry of the Interior in Iraq.

These exports are consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. Future applications will continue to be assessed on a case by case basis against the UN Embargo and Consolidated Criteria, taking into account the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Export Licence Applications (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Chris Mullin): Following consultations with this Department, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry issued a licence for the export to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) of bomb disposal suits and equipment. This equipment will be used by the Royal Nepalese Army, who are part of the Ituri Brigade of the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC).

UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1493 (2003), adopted on 28 July 2003, implemented an embargo on the provision of arms and any related material to all armed groups operating in the east of the country.

Operative Paragraph 21 of the SCR provides an exemption to the embargo for "supplies to MONUC . . . ".

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Employment Regulations (2004)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe): The Department of Trade and Industry is helping business and other stakeholders adapt to changes to employment law and practice. Beginning in 2004, the DTI will implement those changes, which arise from within the UK and on which the Department leads, on only two dates in each year. It will also say at the beginning of each year, through an annual statement of forthcoming employment regulations, what those changes are expected to be.

The two common commencement dates are:

April 6—the start of the tax year

October 1—when the minimum wage is revised

The harmonisation of commencement dates is intended to ensure that changes to employment policy are made in a co-ordinated fashion and to provide businesses, employee representatives and individuals with greater clarity and awareness about when changes will be made. This should assist all parties to plan for new measures and help implement them effectively. Other Government Departments are considering how they might follow the DTI's lead where appropriate.

This first annual statement details changes to employment law and practice that are due to commence in 2004 where DTI has the lead. It comprises of four Sections:

Section A details changes to employment law and practice that are due to commence on 6 April 2004

Section B details changes to employment law and practice that are due to commence on 1 October 2004

Section C details employment regulations arising from Europe where the coming into force date is different and not aligned to either common commencement date

Section D details other key activity by DTI that will impact on the employment law framework in 2004 and beyond.

Further information on employment laws and the supporting framework is available on the DTI website http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/

Section A

Regulations to commence on 6 April 2004

Section A details changes to employment law and practice that are due to commence on 6 April 2004.

6 April '04 Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations

These regulations will apply to the private recruitment industry and will largely update the existing requirements that govern their conduct. Regulations that are out of date and unnecessary are being repealed.

Further information: www.dti.gov.uk/er/agency.htm

6 April '04 Extension of Acas Arbitration Scheme to Scotland

ACAS presently provides an arbitration service to resolve complaints concerning unfair dismissal and flexible working, as an alternative to resolution at Employment Tribunal in England and Wales. This Order will provide arbitration for complaints arising in Scotland. It only impacts on those employers and employees in Scotland who are seeking to use arbitration to resolve a complaint.

Further information: www.acas.org.uk

6 April '04 Maternity leave and paternity, and adoption leave and pay regulations

Technical amendments to fine-tune the operation of the new laws for working parents introduced in April 2003

Further information:
http://www.dti.gov.uk/workingparents/

6 April '04 Regulations to amend the National Minimum Wage to introduce new fair piece rate regime

The amendments introduce a system of fair piece rates for output workers (workers that are paid according to how many pieces they produce). Output workers will either have to be paid the minimum wage for all hours worked, or paid under a system called rated output work.

Further information: www.dti.gov.uk/er/nmw

Section B

Regulations to commence on 1 October 2004

Section B details changes to employment law and practice that are due to commence on 1 October 2004.

1 October '04 Annual revision of National Minimum Wage

The Low Pay Commission has recommended that on 1 October 2004 the National Minimum Wage should rise to £4.85 per hour for adult workers and £4.10 per hour for those aged 18–21. It is due to report on any fine-tuning of this recommendation in light of economic conditions in February 2004.

The Government have also asked the Commission to report by February 2004 on the possible introduction of a minimum wage for workers aged 16 and 17. It is possible that a new minimum wage rate may be introduced for this group in October 2004. The Government will not make any decision until the Commission has reported.

Further information: www.dti.gov.uk/er/nmw

1 October '04 Dispute Resolution Regulations

The regulations will introduce new statutory procedures to encourage the resolution of dismissal, disciplinary and grievance disputes in the workplace.

Further Information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/disputeresolution.htm

1 OCTOBER '04 DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE CODE OF PRACTICE

To take account of the new statutory procedures a revised version of the widely-used ACAS Code of Practice will take effect. The Code of Practice sets out practical advice and guidance for dealing with disciplinary and grievance matters in the workplace.

Further information: www.acas.org.uk

1 OCTOBER '04 EMPLOYMENT APPEAL TRIBUNAL (EAT) RULES

Amendment of existing EAT Rules arising out of the Employment Act 2002 relating to the handling of costs and expenses. The EAT President has also tabled proposals for changes to the appeal process. The changes will only impact on employers and employees who are resolving a dispute at the EAT.

Further information:
www.employmentappeals.gov.uk

1 OCTOBER '04 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL (CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF PROCEDURE) REGULATIONS

The new regulations and rules of procedure will seek to modernise the tribunal system and render it more efficient. The regulations will cover both England and Wales, and Scotland and will impact on employees and their employers who are seeking to resolve a dispute at an employment tribunal.

Further information:
www. dti.gov.uk/er/individual/etregs_consult. htm

1 OCTOBER '04 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS: NEW APPLICATION FORMS

Both applicants and respondents (typically employers) will be required to use new forms when dealing with an employment tribunal case. These new forms will require both parties to share more information earlier in the tribunal process. The changes will impact on employees and their employers who are seeking to resolve a dispute at an employment tribunal.

Further information:
www.employmenttribunals.gov.uk

1 OCTOBER '04 EQUAL PAY ACT, RULES OF PROCEDURE IN EQUAL VALUE CLAIMS

The regulations simplify and streamline the complex rules of procedure relating to equal value tribunal cases. The aim is to speed up the independent expert procedure that presently can cause delay.

Further information:
www. womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/legislation

1 OCTOBER '04 EQUAL PAY ACT, "NO REASONABLE GROUNDS" PROVISION

A short set of regulations will amend the "no reasonable grounds" provision in the Equal Pay Act, in order to clarify it.

Further information:
www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/legislation

1 OCTOBER '04 TUPE REGULATIONS (PROBABLE)

The revision of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE) take on board amendments to the EC Acquired Rights Directive and will provide more clarity over whether or not the regulations apply to particular contracting-out or analogous situations. They will apply to all businesses in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Note: It is possible that the commencement of the regulations may not take place until 2005.

Further information:
http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/individual/tupe-pl699.htm

Section C

Other regulations arising from Europe which are not aligned to either common commencement date

The commencement dates of regulations arising from Europe are not fully within the control of the DTI. Section C details employment regulations arising from Europe where it has not been possible to align the coming into force dates with either of the two common commencement dates.

AUGUST '04 WORKING TIME: JUNIOR DOCTORS

Provisions in the existing Working Time (Amendment) Regulations 2003 which cover doctors in training will commence on 1 August 2004.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/work_time_regs/wtr2.htm#special

8 OCTOBER '04 THE EUROPEAN COMPANY STATUTE

The Regulation for the European Company Statute, which is entirely voluntary, takes direct effect in all Member States on 8 October. The Regulation is supplemented by a Directive covering the employee involvement arrangements that apply to a European Company. The regulations implementing the Statute will also implement the Directive. It is not possible to align the date with either common commencement date.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/cld/condocs.htm

Section D

Other key activity

Section D highlights other key activity by DTI that will have an impact on the employment law framework in 2004 and beyond. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list. Detailed information on new and existing employment regulations and policies is available on the DTI website www.dti.gov.uk/er

2004 CONSULTATIONS IN 2004

Details of new employment policies and issues under consultation are available on the DTI website. The web page is updated regularly and contains an option to be notified by email whenever a news items is added.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/hot_topics.htm

2004 EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS BILL 2003

A new Bill on employment relations is currently being taken forward by Parliament. The Bill is mainly concerned with collective labour law and trade union

rights. It is too early to say with certainty when any employment regulations arising from the Bill will commence which will depend on when the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/erbill_2003.htm

ANNUALLY (1 FEBRUARY '04) ANNUAL REVISION OF EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL AWARD LIMITS.

The law requires the upper limits of the various employment tribunal awards and payments to vary in line with the movement of the Retail Prices Index. These annual changes take effect on 1 February each year and impact on employees and their employers who seek to resolve a dispute at an employment tribunal.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/pay/limits-pl827.htm

ANNUALLY REVISION OF THE STANDARD RATES OF STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY (SMP), STATUTORY (4 APRIL (04)) PATERNITY PAY (SPP) AND STATUTORY ADOPTION PAY (SAP)

The standard rates of SMP, SPP and SAP are to be increased to £102.80 per week (or 90 per cent. of the person's average weekly earnings if that is less than £102.80). The changes will be included in the Department for Work and Pensions annual uprating order—the Social Security Benefits Uprating Order 2004. For 2004, the increased rates will apply from Sunday 4 April. This is because SMP payment weeks typically begin on a Sunday and follows the precedent for previous years.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/workingparents

SPRING 2005 INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION DIRECTIVE

Implementation of the Information and Consultation Directive, which gives employees in larger firms new rights to information and consultation about the business and the prospects for employment. The intention is to publish a revised version of regulations and draft guidance early in 2004, and to lay the final version of the regulations in Parliament when the Employment Relations Bill has received Royal Assent in 2004. The legislation will come into force in Spring 2005.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/consultation.htm

2005 EQUAL TREATMENT DIRECTIVE

Implementation of the amended Equal Treatment Directive, which requires equal treatment for men and women. It strengthens the principle of equal treatment contained in the 1976 Equal Treatment Directive. It takes a similar line, where appropriate, to the Employment and Race Directives under Article 13. Further consultation will take place during 2004. Legislation will come into force no later than October 2005.

Further information:
www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/legislation

OCTOBER 2006 AGE DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION

Implementation of the elements of the European Discrimination Directive which will outlaw discrimination in employment on the grounds of age. The aim is to make draft regulations by end 2004, after further consultation in the Spring. To allow businesses and employee representatives sufficient time to prepare for the changes, the regulations will not be brought into force until October 2006.

Further information:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/age.htm

Notes

The harmonisation of the commencement dates of employment regulations stems from a recommendation in the Better Regulation Taskforce 2002 report "Employment Regulation: Striking a balance". The Taskforce reported that a common complaint by employers was that changes to employment policy seem to happen in an uncoordinated fashion. It proposed common commencement dates for employment policy.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 31 March 2003 that the DTI would take the following action:

6 April (the beginning of the tax year) and 1 October (when the minimum wage is revised) will become the two set commencement dates for domestic employment regulations for which the DTI is responsible.

For European legislation there will be a three stage approach:

(i) the "coming into force" dates in 2003, which have been in the public domain for some time, will remain unchanged;

(ii) from January 2004, the DTI will plan the "coming into force" dates for Directives where deadlines have already been set, but which have not yet been implemented, on a case-by-case basis;

(iii) the DTI will aim to negotiate three-year transposition deadlines for future EU Directives so that it will have enough time to consult and still align with the two set dates.

Beginning in 2004, DTI will publish an annual statement of forthcoming employment regulations every January.

The DTI will ask central Government to foster inter-departmental co-operation with these changes.

In Budget 2003 the Chancellor said other Government Departments should adopt the same approach.

An email alert system (www.dti.gov.uk/email/subscribe.htm) is now available on the DTI website for users to subscribe. Over 3,000 people have already registered.

Written Ministerial Statements

Thursday 15 January 2004

HOME DEPARTMENT

Terrorism Act

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Blunkett): I am pleased to say that Lord Carlile of Berriew QC has completed the report on the operation of part VII of the Act, which will be laid before the House today.

Language Analysis Pilot

The Minister for Citizenship and Immigration (Beverley Hughes): I refer to the statement that I made on 21 October 2003 about the outcome of the pilot testing of language analysis for selected asylum applicants who claimed to be nationals of Afghanistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka. My statement quoted a figure of 21 per cent. for the detection of false Somali nationals and it is necessary to clarify this finding. As the summary of findings of the three-country language analysis pilot which was placed in the Library of the House showed 12 per cent. of those tested who claimed to be from Somalia were found to be false nationals. The figure of 21 per cent. related to the Somali applicants who were tested and were found not to be from the region or tribe they claimed. Overall, 34 per cent. of the claimed Somali applicants who were tested were either not from Somalia or not from the region or tribe that they had claimed. I apologise for any confusion that may have been caused by the presentation of the figures in my earlier statement.

Criminal Records Bureau

The Minister for Crime Reduction, Policing and Community Safety (Ms Hazel Blears): On 27 February 2003, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced, *Official Report*, cols. 32WS–36WS, the Government's response to the recommendations of the independent review ream, appointed the previous September to take a fundamental look at the operation of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). One of their recommendations was that the Capita contract should be renegotiated to align the contract to the changed and evolving circumstances that had occurred since the original contract was signed back in August 2000. Following a thorough and constructive period of negotiation, the Criminal Records Bureau and Capita signed a revised contract on 22 December 2003.

The revised contract is a major step forward for the CRB and represents a substantial improvement over the previous terms. The revised contract now provides for:

- as a result of recent and planned efficiency savings, from October 2004, a significant reduction in the price paid to Capita for processing each disclosure application;
- the ability to achieve year-on-year operational cost reductions with further incentives to reduce operational costs over the lifetime of the contact; any such cost savings would be reflected in further price reductions;
- pricing levels matched to guaranteed volumes, agreed on a bi-annual basis;
- additional contractual performance measures including both qualitative and quantitative standards to enhance further the Disclosure service;
- far greater clarity of roles and responsibilities within the partnership;
- incentives to allow Capita to further enhance the IT and other technical systems to meet evolving process and output requirements;
- the implementation of recommendations made by independent consultants on the IT system;
- an improved agreement in respect of financial penalties for failing to meet agreed performance standards which have been revised to meet the evolving circumstances that had occurred since the original contract was signed back in August 2000;
- a one off payment to Capita of £3.6 million in final settlement of the earlier agreed contract change which provided for the introduction of the blank application form. The payment covered the additional cost of processing the blank application forms in the period February to September 2003.

Capita's part in the re-negotiation underlined their commitment to this partnership and to this important public service, it also reinforced our belief that it was preferable to continue with the partnership if at all possible. The partnership approach, with continued 'open book' accounting, and commitment shown during this re-negotiation augurs well for the future.

The CRB is now on a sound footing and through the revised contract will now have far greater flexibility to improve and develop the Disclosure service over the coming years.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Electoral Registration

The Minister for Local Government, Regional Governance and Fire (Mr. Nick Raynsford): As the Government reaffirmed in its White Paper Response—"The Government's Response to the Electoral Commission's report: The Shape of Elections to Come—A Strategic Evaluation of the 2003 Electoral Pilot Schemes" (CM5975)—we are committed to developing multi-channelled, e-enabled elections, culminating in an e-enabled general election sometime after 2006. As a further step to achieving this goal we are today, in partnership with the Department for Constitutional Affairs including the Scotland Office, launching a new project to modernise the electoral registration process in Great Britain and which will lead to the registration infrastructure that can underpin multi-channelled, e-enabled elections.

This project—CORE (Co-ordinated Online Register of Electors)—will be in two phases. The first will standardise local electronic electoral registers across the country and make them fully interoperable regardless of the local system in use. The second phase will allow authorised users to access local registration data centrally and will support a multi-channelled, e-enabled general election. The project replaces the earlier proposed LASER project to modernise the registration

process, which was to have been led by the Improvement and Development Agency. Copies of a project outline, which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is publishing today is available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Throughout the project we will be working closely with local government, the registration software suppliers, and other key stakeholders. Government are providing £12 million Capital Modernisation Fund resources to meet the costs of the project, and we will shortly be consulting local government and others on the details for taking forward the project, including details of the funding arrangements.

We are committed to making voting more accessible and straightforward for the electorate and to allow people more flexibility in where and when they vote. This project aims to improve the quality of electoral registers and ensure that accurate and timely registration will support the needs of the electorate and authorised users and help facilitate voting in the future. It is an essential element of our electoral modernisation agenda.

Regional and Local Referendums

The Minister for Local Government, Regional Governance and Fire (Mr. Nick Raynsford): I have today published for consultation a paper discussing the provisions to be made for the Electoral Commission to pay counting officers for the expenses they incur in connection with the regional assembly referendums and the associated local government referendums. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister expects to hold the referendums in autumn.

Copies of the documents are available in the Libraries of the House. They will also be available on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website:

http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=4095&l=2

This consultation, and the two launched on 18th December concerned with the combination of the regional and local referendums and on registration and spending limits respectively, will run until 16th February. We would be very grateful for all comments on these proposals.

Planning Appeals

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Keith Hill): When the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister introduced new procedures in August 2000 to improve the handling of planning appeals we said that their operation would be monitored and reviewed. The outcome of the most recent review has suggested a need for some changes to be made.

There was concern expressed during the course of the review by a wide range of stakeholders about the perceived inequity for third parties taking part in the appeals process. It was considered anomalous that the rules do not allow third parties to comment on the appeal statements made by the main parties. In order to address this inequity and more fully involve all members of the community in the planning process, we intend to conduct a consultation on proposals to amend the rules for written representations, hearings and inquiries procedures. The proposed amendment would allow third parties that have commented at the 6-week stage a further opportunity to comment on main parties' appeal statements at the 9-week stage of an appeal.

We shall also be amending the rules to take account of drafting amendments suggested by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and to correct minor technical anomalies.

TRANSPORT

Night Flying Restrictions

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Tony McNulty): On 8 April 2003, *Official Report*, cols 9–10WS, we announced publication of a consultation paper on night flying restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. The present night restrictions regime for those airports applies until 31 October 2004: the consultation paper explained our proposal to defer our intended review of those night restrictions and to continue the present regime for a further year. The consultation period ended on 11 July 2003.

Briefly, the reasons for our proposal were:

(a) that it seemed wise to defer consultation on a long term night noise policy until the responses to the consultation on The future development of air transport in the United Kingdom: South East, including views about the appropriate review cycle for night restrictions, had been considered and the air transport White Paper published, thus enabling all options to be considered in the light of the wider policy context;

(b) that it seemed preferable to wait until we had the judgment of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights on a case concerning the 1993 night restrictions regime at Heathrow before reviewing our objectives and bringing forward detailed proposals for a further night restrictions regime;

(c) that European Directive 2002/30/EC requires us to describe the environmental objective(s) for each airport concerned, before proposing and assessing what restrictions would be appropriate in order to achieve those objectives, and we considered it preferable to establish those objectives in the context of the White Paper.

The proposal to extend the current night restrictions regime for one further year indicated that all the common arrangements—the hours of the restrictions, the system for classifying aircraft and other detailed aspects of the regime—should continue unchanged until the end of the summer season 2005 (30 October 2005).

We also proposed that the movement limits and noise quotas for the winter season 2004–05 and for the summer season 2005 should remain the same as those for winter 2003–04 and summer 2004 respectively at each of the three airports.

The consultation paper also

(a) commenced consultation on some of the general principles and policies underlying the night restrictions; in particular, the present policy of having common arrangements at all three airports and the broad issues relating to the possible extension of the night quota period (currently 2330–0600);

(b) explained how we intend to take forward the results of two reviews relating to the classification of aircraft for night restrictions purposes;

(c) explained how we intend to take forward the results of a separate review of the departure noise limits and the related noise monitoring arrangements.

The consultation responses encompassed the full range of interests, including airport consultative committees, local authorities and parish councils, environmental and other groups and individuals from around all three airports, plus airlines and aviation bodies. The decision that I am announcing today relates only to the arrangements for 2004–05.

After careful consideration of all relevant points made in the responses, we have decided to extend the night restrictions regime at all three airports as proposed. The reasons for doing so remain largely as set out in the consultation paper and summarised in this statement, and were accepted by many of those responding to the consultation. We welcomed the judgment of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, received three days before the consultation period closed. That judgment clears the way for our forthcoming review of policy on night flights at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted.

There was a wide but not universal acceptance among those who responded specifically on the proposal to extend the current regime for a further year, that this was appropriate, although a substantial number of local authorities and local groups from around all three airports indicated that they want a reduction in night flights, or a complete ban, in the longer term. There was some comment on the size of the movement limits and noise quotas for 2004–05, especially from those commenting on the findings of the main technical review about the classification of aircraft for night restrictions purposes.

The issue that has attracted attention from this review is the finding that the version of the Boeing 747 most commonly operating at Heathrow during the restricted hours was noisier in normal operations than its certificated noise levels by the noise certification procedures of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). There are many reasons why monitored noise levels will not match certificated noise levels, particularly because certification testing is carried out under strictly controlled meteorological and acoustical conditions and using defined flight path procedures which may differ from those used in-service. However, we have drawn the results of the work to the attention of international experts currently examining the ICAO noise certification requirements to ensure that they reflect modern operating practices and conditions.

Some consultees suggested or implied there should be an immediate substantial cut in the noise quotas if these aircraft were not reclassified. The Government does not accept immediate action would be appropriate. This is a matter which the Government believes should be considered in the context of the new arrangements and requirements which flow from Directive 2002/30/EC (now transposed into domestic law: SI 2003 No. 1742) when the wide ranging review takes place.

At Gatwick and Stansted the mix of aircraft operating at night is different, as are issues relating to the size of the noise quotas. The 1999 decision included small progressions (downwards at Gatwick, upwards at Stansted) in the noise quotas over the five years of the night restrictions regime. In the consultation paper we indicated that we had considered whether to continue these progressions for a further year but that, as the progressions were small and the services operating at night were in a considerable state of flux, we believed it better to have no change between the last year of that scheme and a one year extension. None of those who responded to the consultation paper suggested an increase in the quotas for Stansted but at Gatwick some local consultees suggested cutting the movements limits and noise quotas which are currently under used, particularly in winter. Given the difficulty in the current consultation round of establishing whether and to what extent any cut might be appropriate, the Government remains of the view that the status quo should be maintained pending a full consideration of all the issues.

We have therefore decided that, at each of the three airports, the movement limits and noise quotas for the winter season 2004–05 and the summer season 2005 shall be the same as those for winter 2003–04 and summer 2004 respectively. These are:

WINTER SEASON 2004–05

	Movements Limit	Noise Quota
Heathrow	2550	4140
Gatwick	5250	6640
Stansted	5000	3550

SUMMER SEASON 2005

	Movements Limit	Noise Quota
Heathrow	3250	5610
Gatwick	11200	9000
Stansted	7000	4950

This decision maintains the balance struck between the conflicting interests in 10 June 1999, *Official Report*, cols 378–79. We are satisfied that this will remain the appropriate balance for 2004–05 whilst we carry out the further review of night flying restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted.

Copies of all the responses, except where the author has requested confidentiality, are available for six months for inspection by prior appointment at the DfT Library and Information Centre, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE.

I am placing in the House Library a summary of the responses, including points relating to the general principles and policies underlying the night restrictions and to the ways in which we intend to take forward the results of the reviews relating to the classification of aircraft for night restrictions purposes and of the separate review of the departure noise limits and the related noise monitoring arrangements. The responses on these other matters will be taken into account in developing proposals for the next night restrictions regime for consultation in due course. The summary of responses is also available on the Department's website: www.aviation.dft.gov.uk

DEFENCE

Gurkha MAS Policy

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): On 4 June 2003, it was announced that the Ministry of Defence would

undertake a review of Gurkha Married Accompanied Service (MAS) policy. The aim of the Review was to consider whether the current arrangements were satisfactory and what changes, if any, would be necessary. In examining possible changes the Review team are also considering whether any of the special circumstances of Gurkha employment justify MAS restrictions and, if so, to what extent.

The Review team is studying a number of options, the detailed work of which is not yet complete. I had originally hoped to announce the outcome of the review to the House by the end of 2003. I anticipate being in a position to make a full and substantive announcement on the outcome of the review to the House later in the year.

Armed Forces Pensions and Compensation

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): The House of Commons Defence Committee published its report on armed forces pensions and compensation on 16 December 2003 (HC 96). The Government's response is published today in a Command Paper (Cm 6109), ahead of the second reading debate on the Armed Forces (Pensions and Compensation) Bill on Tuesday 20 January. Copies are available in the Vote Office from 12 o'clock.

Normandy Landings (Commemoration)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): I am pleased to announce that Her Majesty The Queen and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have accepted invitations from the President of France to attend commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the Normandy Landings in France in June this year. Further information about the programme, including attendance by other members of The Royal Family and representatives of the Government, will be issued in due course.

TREASURY

Museums

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Paul Boateng): The "*Securing the Best for our Museums: Private Giving and Government Support*" report has been published today and copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses and in the Vote Office. Copies will also be sent to the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales.

I appointed Sir Nicholas Goodison to lead a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of support to regional and national museums and galleries to help them acquire works of art and culture of distinction that might otherwise be sold abroad, and to make those items accessible to the public. This review was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Budget 2003. The review is now complete and the "*Securing the Best for Our Museums: Private Giving and Government Support*" report contains Sir Nicholas Goodison's findings and recommendations.

The Government will carefully consider the recommendations ahead of Budget 2004 and as part of the 2004 Spending Review.

Tax Avoidance

The Paymaster General (Dawn Primarolo): Legislation to prevent tax avoidance using transactions in strips of Government bonds is to be included in Finance Bill 2004. The legislation applies to holdings of such strips where the profits or losses are chargeable to income tax and addresses the artificial creation of losses that can be set against other income. The changes will have effect from today.

A copy of today's Inland Revenue News Release giving the relevant background to this measure is being deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and is also accessible on the Inland Revenue's website: http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Oil and Gas Production

The Minister for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services (Mr. Stephen Timms): I am pleased to inform the House that I am today offering ATP Oil and Gas (UK) Ltd. an oil and gas production licence on seaward block 2/15 in the northern North Sea.

The successful applicant will have a fixed period in which to decide whether or not to accept the offers.

The DTI undertook an environmental screening assessment to ensure compliance with environmental legislation, and concluded that

> "the screening had not identified any environmental concern that would prejudice the offering of block 2/15 for licence".

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 19 January 2004

HOME DEPARTMENT

Overseas Surveillance Officers

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Caroline Flint): Article 40 of the Schengen Convention sets out the basis for cross border surveillance by police officers from member states. Subject to a Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council decision authorising the United Kingdom to begin applying the relevant provisions of the Schengen Acquis, we have decided that in strictly pre-planned operations, and on a basis of full reciprocity, overseas surveillance officers should be able to travel armed by sea or rail to the UK, but not by air.

Foreign Officers would not be able to carry their firearms beyond the confines of the port or rail station at which they arrive. The purpose of this agreement is to allow for continuing, without putting officers at additional risk, the surveillance of a dangerous individual leaving the UK or of one coming to the UK who will then be followed from the port by armed UK surveillance teams.

Each foreign officer will require authority from the Home Secretary to carry firearms under section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968, and an import licence. Before an authorisation is given to allow the carriage of firearms, the operation will be risk assessed by a UK police officer of at least Assistant Chief Constable rank.

Foreign officers on urgent operations under Article 40(2) of the Schengen Convention will not be able to carry firearms in any circumstances.

HEALTH

NHS Foundation Trusts

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. John Hutton): The Secretary of State has decided to support the applications of 24 NHS trusts in becoming NHS foundation trusts.

The applications will now be sent to the office of the independent regulator. The final decision on whether a trust can become an NHS foundation trust rests with the independent regulator.

The NHS trusts concerned are:

Addenbrooke's NHS Trust
Basildon & Thurrock General Hospitals NHS Trust
Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust
Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Trust
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Trust
Countess Of Chester Hospital NHS Trust
Doncaster & Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Trust
Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust
Guy's & St Thomas Hospital NHS Trust
Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust
King's College Hospital NHS Trust
Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust
North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Trust
Papworth Hospital NHS Trust
Peterborough Hospitals NHS Trust
Rotherham General Hospitals NHS Trust
Royal Devon & Exeter Health Care NHS Trust
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Southern Derbyshire Acute Hospital Services NHS Trust
Stockport NHS Trust
The Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Trust
The Royal Marsden NHS Trust
University College London Hospitals NHS Trust
University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust

CABINET OFFICE

Government Communications Review

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Douglas Alexander): The full report of the independent review of Government communications, chaired by Bob Phillis, has been published today. The Minister for the Cabinet Office is grateful to the review for its work and consideration of these issues.

The Report builds on the Review Team's interim report published in the summer. The Government accepted the interim report's recommendations. Central to the process is the appointment of a new Permanent Secretary, Government Communications, which the Cabinet Office is currently in the process of recruiting.

Departments have the responsibility to devise and implement communications operations and strategies appropriate to their needs. Bearing this in mind, the new Permanent Secretary will take forward, in consultation with Departments, recommendations relating to a redefinition of the overall role of Government communications, the structures necessary to deliver this activity and the improved training and development of all communications specialists.

The Permanent Secretary will also consider whether the existing rules and guidance are fit for purpose and whether any additional clarification is required. We note the Committee's conclusion on ministerial involvement in the selection processes for communications professionals which will be taken forward in discussions already underway with the Civil Service Commissioners.

The Government also agree that it must communicate with the public in the widest possible way, including greater use of regional briefings and electronic communications. It will look at how Departments' websites could be better coordinated and structured to encourage greater public participation in the development and communication of Government policies.

The Government remain committed to the principle, reflected in the Ministerial Code, that when the House is sitting announcements of Government policy should, in the first instance, be made in Parliament. It agrees that

more Ministers should host lobby briefings and that these should be open and televised. The Government will now enter into discussions with the relevant public authorities, including Parliament, and the Parliamentary Lobby, on how best to pursue these proposals.

The Government also note the review's recommendations on the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act. A great deal of work is going on to ensure that departments are fully prepared for the legislation which comes into force on 1 January 2005 and the Government are fully committed to ensuring full and effective implementation of the Act across the whole of the public sector. The review's recommendations will be taken into account as part of this implementation process.

On the use of statistics, the Government welcome the review's acknowledgement that some important steps have been taken to reinforce the independence of the statistical service. The Government note the review's recommendations on access to pre-release national statistics. Under the National Statistics Code of Practice and its associated protocol on release practices, issued in September 2002, there are already long-established and effective procedures in place to restrict early access to certain data to a small number of Ministers and officials, so that they are able to provide an authoritative response when questions arise at the time of release. There are no plans to change this.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Bill Rammell): Air links between the Falkland Islands and the South American mainland are the subject of two understandings reached between HMG and the Argentine Government, under a sovereignty umbrella (which protects both sides' positions on the question of sovereignty). Following the UK/Argentine Joint Statement of July 1999, LAN Chile resumed their weekly flight between Punta Arenas (in southern Chile) and the Falkland Islands. Once a month this flight makes a stopover in each direction in Rio Gallegos (in southern Argentina). In February 2001 a further understanding was signed to permit private flights. Under these arrangements aircraft, including Argentine aircraft, can undertake private flights between Argentina and the Falkland Islands. These arrangements continue in place and are unaffected by developments set out below.

In recent years there have also been a number of charter flights to the Falkland Islands, mostly originating in Chile and servicing tourist cruise ships. These charter flights are not covered by either of the two understandings described above. They require permission to use Argentine airspace between Chile and the Falkland Islands. Until this season Argentina has not raised any difficulties with these charter flight authorisations, though it had periodically indicated that it would wish to review the situation at some point.

On 3 November 2003, without warning, Argentina announced the suspension of permission for charter flights to use Argentine airspace and proposed that a scheduled air service between Argentina and the Falkland Islands by an Argentine carrier be put in place. The weekly LAN Chile scheduled flight was not affected by this announcement.

We made clear to Argentina that while we were prepared to enter into discussions about ways of building on existing arrangements for air links between the Falkland Islands and the South American mainland, any future arrangements must be acceptable to the Falkland Islanders, and that the Falkland Islanders were not prepared to accept a scheduled service by an Argentine carrier. We also made clear that such discussions needed to take place against the backdrop of charter flight authorisations proceeding normally.

Regrettably, despite considerable efforts it has not been possible to reach agreement with the Argentine Government on opening talks on air services on acceptable terms. This means that there is little prospect of charter flights to the Falkland Islands being authorised to overfly Argentine airspace for the rest of this tourist season. Unless such an understanding can be reached with the Argentine Government, it seems likely that charters for the next tourist season will also be affected. Falkland Island Councillors have been kept fully informed of our exchanges with the Argentine Government.

The cancellation of the charter flights will obviously have some negative impact on the tourist industry in the Falkland Islands. However, Falkland Islanders believe that there are principles at stake here which outweigh short term economic costs. We respect and agree with that view. Argentina is fully aware of our position and we hope that an acceptable arrangement can be reached in the interests of all parties to resolve the charter flight issue.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Emission Trading Scheme

The Minister for the Environment (Mr. Elliot Morley): I have today issued a consultation paper "*EU Emissions Trading Scheme—UK Draft National Allocation Plan for 2005 to 2007*", which invites views from individuals and organisations on the Government's proposals for allocating allowances to participants in the first phase of the EU scheme and on a number of operational issues.

The EU emissions trading scheme will start in 2005 and will establish the world's largest ever market in emissions allowances. The scheme is the most significant measure in the EU climate change programme. Its objective is to reduce, in the most cost effective way, EU emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to the problems associated with global warming. The Government stated in last year's Energy White Paper that the scheme will be a central plank of its future emissions reductions policies. The scheme will regulate the carbon dioxide emissions of up to 10,000 installations across the EU including those in the power

generation, mineral oil, iron and steel, mineral and pulp and paper sectors. Approximately 1,500 UK installations are expected to be within the scope of the scheme which are responsible for about 50 per cent. of total UK emissions of carbon dioxide.

The Government is firmly committed to its national goal of moving towards a 20 per cent. reduction of carbon dioxide by 2010. The initial allocation of allowances for the first phase of the scheme is consistent with an overall reduction in UK carbon dioxide emissions of 16.3 per cent. The overall level of allowances to be allocated for the second phase, which runs from 2008–2012, will be strengthened to be consistent with the trading sector's contribution to achieving the 20 per cent. goal.

The consultation documents explain the decisions that the Government has taken in the light of responses to earlier consultation. In particular it explains how the total quantity of allowances has been calculated, how these allowances are to be distributed between each of the industry sectors covered by the scheme in 2005–2007, how sector totals are to be distributed between individual installations and the proportion of allowances to be allocated each year. They also set out proposals for allocating allowances to new installations and for dealing with plants which close, including making use of the auctioning provision to distribute any unused allowances set aside for new entrants.

Each EU member state is required to draw up a draft national allocation plan for submissions to the European Commission by the end of March 2004. Consultation will run until Friday 12 March. The Government will be holding a consultation seminar and meetings with individual sectors of industry during the consultation period to discuss the proposals. Following this the draft national allocation plan will be refined to take account of comments made during consultation before it is submitted to the European Commission.

Written Ministerial Statements

Tuesday 20 January 2004

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

"The Planning Service: Costs and Fees"

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Keith Hill): The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have today published "*The Planning Service: Costs and Fees*". This is a report prepared by Arup Economics and Planning into the way in which the powers in clause 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill might be used. Using the report, we are considering the nature and scope of any fees and charges that might be prescribed by the Secretary of State under that clause. The objective is to ensure the proper resourcing of planning services so that they can deliver for business and communities. We will bring forward full proposals for public consultation in the summer.

Copies of the report are available in the Libraries of both Houses and on the website of The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at

http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=2445&l=2.

TRANSPORT

King's Cross Underground Station

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Dr. Kim Howells): I have asked for a review of the final phase of the planned development of the London Underground station at King's Cross.

The Department is funding works being undertaken by London Underground to deliver a significantly enhanced Underground station at King's Cross, in order to assist dispersal of passengers from the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and in part to meet the recommendations of the Fennell Inquiry into the 1987 King's Cross fire.

The works under way to improve the existing Underground ticket hall and to construct a new Western Ticket Hall are not affected by the review. They will deliver a significant increase in capacity and meet the Fennell recommendations, and are on course to be delivered by the beginning of 2007.

Progress with the final phase of the works, involving construction of a new Northern Ticket Hall, is at a much less advanced stage. The cost has roundly doubled since 1999, to something of the order of £250 million. I have concluded that the case for proceeding with these works should be reviewed before further significant expenditure is undertaken.

I have therefore asked Mott Parsons Gibb, the Department's technical advisers for the CTRL project, to undertake a thorough review of the case for the Northern Ticket Hall works, in consultation with key stakeholders who might be affected by a change in the current plans, and to report back to me by the summer on the options and their practical, operational, and financial implications.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Blunkett): I am today laying before Parliament a draft Order to continue the powers of detention in the Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCS) for a further twelve months. It will be debated, by both Houses of Parliament, by early March.

The public emergency which necessitated the introduction of these powers—and which arises principally as a result of the threat of international terrorism posed by foreign nationals—still exists. Where terrorism is concerned, our paramount responsibility is to ensure public safety and national security. Where a foreign national is suspected of terrorism of the sort which led to September 11 2001 and is considered to be a threat to national security but cannot currently be removed—and for whom a criminal prosecution is not an option—we believe that it is necessary and proportionate to provide for extended detention, pending removal. The person would be free to leave the United Kingdom if he wished to do so.

The draft Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (Continuance in force of sections 21–23) Order 2003 provides for the continuation of the immigration powers under Part 4 of the 2001 Act to certify, and to detain pending removal, suspected international terrorists, subject to safeguards. The continuation is from 14 March 2004 until 13 March 2005.

To date, 16 people have been certified and detained under the powers contained in Part 4 of the ATCS Act. Two of these have chosen to leave the United Kingdom as the detainees are free to do at any time. One further individual has been certified but is currently detained under other powers.

My decisions to certify and detain these individuals were made on the basis of detailed and compelling evidence. All those certified have appealed to the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) including the two who left the United Kingdom. SIAC have rejected the appeals against certification made by the first ten ATCS detainees which were heard between May and July last year. The determination for a further two cases that have been heard have not yet been handed down.

The Special Immigration Appeals Commission is a superior court of record. It has the power to overturn the certificates which I have issued in respect of these detained.

The detention powers in Part 4 of the Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act are a cornerstone of the UK's anti-terrorism measures. It is essential that we are able to take firm, swift action against those who threaten the safety of this country. We will be looking carefully at the conclusions and recommendations of the report of Lord Newton and his Committee, which I laid before the House on 18 December 2003, together with the reports of Lord Carlile, the second of which will be laid before

the House shortly. We will be reporting to the House when we come to debate Lord Newton's report and the renewal powers, and I look forward to a full and vigorous debate. Nonetheless, we continue to believe that the part 4 powers are a necessary and proportionate response to the current threat.

CABINET OFFICE

Code of Practice on Consultation

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Douglas Alexander): Today I am launching a revised Code of Practice on Consultation. It will come into force on 1 April 2004 and replaces the Code of Practice on Written Consultation published in November 2000.

This revised Code will help in the Government's continued drive to improve consultation. It is shorter and clearer; it strengthens the commitment to providing respondents with feedback and to following better regulation best practice in developing policy options.

The Code is supported by web-based guidance available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance. I encourage all Departments and relevant public bodies to use it effectively.

Copies of the Code have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Written Ministerial Statements

Wednesday 21 January 2004

HOME DEPARTMENT

UK Passports (Birth Certificates)

The Minister for Citizenship and Immigration (Beverley Hughes): I have decided that the shortened form of birth certificate, which omits names of parents, will no longer be acceptable evidence of nationality for the purpose of applying for a British passport in the United Kingdom. This will help with our aims of combating identity fraud and in ensuring the integrity of the British passport. It will also bring practice in the UK into line with that at British consular posts overseas, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

Since the British Nationality Act 1981 came into force on 1 January 1983, British nationality has not automatically been acquired by the fact of birth in the UK or a British Overseas Territory. The Act provides that a child born in the UK will be a British citizen if one of the parents is a British citizen or is settled in the UK. Equivalent provisions apply to the overseas territories. A short birth certificate, which establishes only the place and date of birth, is therefore not sufficient to establish eligibility for a passport. The practice introduced on 1 January 1983 was to accept the passport applicant's own declaration on the application form as to the identity and nationality of the parents upon whom the child's British nationality depended. This was a satisfactory interim measure, but is no longer appropriate over 20 years after the change in the law.

The new requirement will introduce an important safeguard against false claims of British nationality and will make identity fraud more difficult. I am aware that although over 75 per cent. of new parents obtain a full standard certificate when registering a birth, many people only have a short birth certificate and will therefore face a small additional expense in obtaining a passport. However it is in everyone's interest that British passports are issued only on production of adequate evidence of British nationality. The change, which will normally affect only those applying for their first passport, will be implemented on 4 May 2004.

TREASURY

Commemorative Crown

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gordon Brown): Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve my recommendation that a commemorative crown should be issued in 2004 to mark the 100th anniversary of the entente cordiale between Britain and France.

Collector versions of the coin will be released at a premium above face value and, during the course of the year, the coin will also become available at its face value of five pounds from banks and post offices.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Gas Desulphurisation Plant

The Minister for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services (Mr. Stephen Timms): I have today granted consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to Rugeley Power Limited for the construction of flue gas desulphurisation plant at the 1,000 MW coal-fired power station at Rugeley in Staffordshire. Planning permission for the plant has also been deemed to be granted, subject to 47 planning conditions agreed with the Staffordshire County Council, the Cannock Chase District Council and the Lichfield District Council.

Copies of the press notice and decision letter are being placed in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Miss Melanie Johnson): I am pleased to announce that, after a two year period of consultation and consideration, we propose to seek Parliament's approval for regulations, under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, to enable people conceived by donated sperm, eggs or embryos in future to know the identity of their donor.

We propose that donors who donate from 1 April 2005 will do so on the understanding that any child born as a result of their donation will be able to obtain from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority identifying details about them when the child reaches the age of 18. This will not apply to people who have donated before that time. It means that the first donor-conceived people to receive identifying information about their donors would do so in 2023.

I must stress that removal of anonymity will not lead to the donor having any responsibility, parental, financial or otherwise, for the child.

In addition, as we announced on 28 January 2003, the regulations will provide for non-identifying information about donors to be given, on request, to donor-conceived people who were born after the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's register came into effect in 1991. This will be available to 18 year olds in 2010. The non-identifying information will be standardised so that, from 2022, all donor-conceived people who request it will be able to receive the same categories of information.

The decision that it is right to remove donor anonymity has been informed by a public consultation on the provision of information to donor-conceived people; a programme of work with clinics and donors; consideration of the position in other countries; and a comparison with the information available to adopted people. We have also listened to the voices of donor-conceived people. Our conclusion is that the interests of the child are paramount, and that the position of donor-conceived people should be aligned more closely with that of adopted people, with access to identifying information about their donor when they reach age 18.

We intend to use the opportunity of the removal of anonymity to encourage a change in the culture of sperm, egg and embryo donation. By bringing more openness to it, we want to see wider recognition of the value and importance of such donations, and greater public appreciation of the dramatic difference that the donors can make to lives and families. To support the transition to identifiable donors we will raise consciousness of the need for donors and the contribution they make to our society through a campaign for public awareness.

The regulations will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible.

We have also considered developments that are taking place more widely in the assisted reproduction area. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act has been in force since 1991. It was landmark legislation at the time, setting up the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and introducing the first regulatory regime in the world specifically for the newly developing field of assisted reproduction. Since then, over 73,000 babies have been born in the UK as a result of treatment procedures regulated under the Act.

Bearing in mind the speed at which new technologies in the fertility field develop, and the complex ethical issues often associated with them, the Act has stood the test of time remarkably well.

However, any cutting-edge legislation, no matter how successful, at some stage needs to be reconsidered and any necessary readjustments made to ensure that it continues to be effective. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act is no exception. Developments in new technologies, changes in public perception of ethical issues, and the effect of international developments all have an impact and need to be considered.

I have concluded, therefore, that it is time to review the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The review will begin in 2004 and will include a full public consultation exercise in 2005. The review will be carried out by the Department, and will include taking account of the work of the Science and Technology Committee, which is considering human reproductive technologies and the law and plans to report later this year. We welcome the work of the Committee.

The review will be wide-ranging, but will exclude certain issues such as embryo research, stem cells and cloning which have been extensively and conclusively debated in Parliament in recent years. The issues that we envisage the review addressing include the range of procedures covered by the Act, checking the safety and efficacy of techniques, ethical considerations and effective regulation.

The Act has been very successful landmark legislation. We believe that it is right to review it to ensure that it continues to be effective in the 21st century.

TRANSPORT

Rural Bus Challenge

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Tony McNulty): I am pleased to announce today the results of the 2003 rural bus challenge competition. A total of £20 million pounds has been awarded to 33 local authorities for 42 schemes which will provide improved local transport in rural areas.

This announcement brings to £110 million the sum awarded under the rural bus challenge scheme, supporting a total of 300 projects. A list of the 2003 awards will be deposited in the Library of the House.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Sound Insulation

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Phil Hope): I have decided to allow robust details, as developed by the House Builders Federation (HBF), to be used as an alternative to pre-completion testing to demonstrate compliance with Part E of the Building Regulations. This applies only to the sound insulation between new houses and flats. The HBF's proposals have been subjected to public consultation with a generally favourable response. They have also been considered by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC) who have recommended acceptance, subject to a monitoring procedure, and a review of the situation in three years. I anticipate that the option to use robust details will come into force on 1 July 2004, and I propose to publish amendment regulations before then.

Future development, maintenance and monitoring of the robust details will be carried out by an independent company set up for the purpose called Robust Details Ltd. This company will be run by a management board whose members represent industry (building and product manufacturers), building control, and consumer interests. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be represented by an Observer.

I am confident that use of robust details will result in significantly improved standards of sound insulation, while imposing much less of a burden on industry than pre-completion testing.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Wassenaar Arrangement

The Minister for Europe (Mr. Denis MacShane): Hon. Members will wish to be aware of the outcome of the plenary of the Wassenaar arrangement on export controls for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies which took place in Vienna on 10–12 December 2003.

The arrangement is the only multilateral export control forum dealing with conventional arms. Its purpose is to prevent de-stabilising accumulations of conventional weapons in sensitive parts of the world by promoting transparency and responsibility in transfers of arms and dual-use goods. The Government believe the arrangement has an important role to play in improving arms exporting practices amongst its current participating states, and can help to spread good practice to other countries.

The plenary meeting concluded a year-long review of the arrangement, which has agreed a number of important changes to its operations, including:

enhanced controls on conventional arms with special emphasis on strengthening capabilities of participating states to combat the threat of terrorism;

increased transparency with the addition of mandatory reporting for all small arms and light weapons (SALW) exports;

strict controls on man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) transfers;

guidelines on arms brokering;

and adopting end-use oriented controls encouraging member Governments to impose export controls on certain unlisted items when necessary to support the United Nations arms embargoes.

The question of admission of new participating states was discussed, although no decisions in this area were taken at the plenary. The plenary also agreed on the importance of work to explain the arrangement's merits to non-participating states.

A ministerial statement was agreed in the name of Ministers from all Wassenaar arrangement states and released at the end of the plenary. The purpose of this statement was to reaffirm the importance participating states attach to the Wassenaar arrangement as a forum for the promotion of peace and stability, as well as to raise the arrangement's public profile. It reads as follows:

"Ministers of the thirty-three participating States in the Wassenaar arrangement on export controls for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies are pleased that the quadrennial assessment of the functioning of the Arrangement has concluded with several important agreements to advance further the Wassenaar arrangement's non-proliferation and international security and stability goals.

We wish to affirm the importance of the Wassenaar arrangement as one of the pillars of multilateral efforts towards peace and stability. We believe agreements reached in the context of the Wassenaar arrangement can play a critical role in preventing the diversion of legal arms transfers and in promoting responsible national export control policies for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies. In this context, we strongly endorse multilateral efforts to develop strict controls on the transfer of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) that continue to pose one of the most serious threats to the safety of international civil aviation.

As we look at ahead and consider the future threats to international security and stability, we are convinced that countries committed to a stable international order must work together closely to prevent conventional weapons and sensitive dual-use technologies from being used to perpetrate terrorist acts. Terrorists must be stopped from diverting weapons from legitimate channels. Building upon the momentum developed during the 2003 assessment, we believe that continued collaboration between the participating states of the Wassenaar arrangement will make a significant contribution to global security"

The Government will continue to work for further changes to the arrangement so that it becomes an even more effective forum for the promotion of responsible and transparent exporting practices for strategic goods.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Postal Elections (Pilot Regions)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs (Mr. Christopher Leslie): In December it was announced that, subject to the European Parliamentary and Local Elections Pilot Bill achieving Royal Assent, the north-east and east midlands regions would pilot all postal voting at the combined European Parliamentary and local elections in June 2004. I can today announce it is our intention that two further regions will also hold all-postal pilots. These regions will be Yorkshire and the Humber and the north-west.

I am pleased to be able to announce these further regions so that the important work of preparing for the pilot elections can begin in earnest. We have identified Yorkshire and the Humber and the north-west after discussion with electoral administrators and look forward to those regions, alongside the north-east and east midlands, helping us to progress our electoral modernisation agenda.

DEFENCE

UK Gulf Veterans' Mortality Data

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Ivor Caplin): As part of the Government's commitment to investigate Gulf veterans' illnesses openly and honestly, data on mortality of veterans of the 1990–91 Gulf conflict are regularly published. The most recent figures, for the period 1 April 1991 to 31 December 2003, were published on 15 January 2004. The key tables from that publication are set out below. Table 1 gives the causes of death to UK Gulf veterans over that period; table 2 shows the deaths due to malignant neoplasms among UK Gulf veterans. As with previous information, the data for Gulf veterans are compared to that of a control group, known as the Era cohort, which is made up of armed forces personnel of a similar age, gender, service, regular/reservist status and rank who were not deployed.

Table 1: Deaths to UK Gulf veterans[1] 1 April 1991–31 December 2003

Causes[2]

ICD Chapter	*Cause of death*	*Gulf*	*Era*	*Mortality Rate Ratio*	*95% Confidence Interval*
	All deaths	**632**	**643**	**0.98**	**(0.88–1.09)**
	All cause coded deaths	**619**	**627**	**0.98**	**(0.88–1.10)**
I–XVI	**Disease-related causes**	**265**	**321**	**0.82**	**(0.70–0.97)**
I	Infectious and parasitic diseases	6	3	1.99	(0.43–12.30)
II	Cancers	115	130	0.88	(0.68–1.14)
III	Endocrine and immune disorders	1	6	0.17	(0.00–1.37)
V	Mental disorders	13	16	0.81	(0.36–1.79)
VI	Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	10	11	0.90	(0.34–2.35)
VII	Diseases of the circulatory system	88	113	0.77	(0.58–1.03)
VIII	Diseases of the respiratory system	11	8	1.37	(0.50–3.92)
IX	Diseases of the digestive system	16	20	0.80	(0.39–1.62)
IV, X–XVI	All other disease-related causes[3]	5	14	0.36	(0.10–1.04)
EXVII	**External causes of injury and poisoning**	**354**	**306**	**1.15**	**(0.99–1.35)**
	Railway accidents	4	1	3.98	(0.39–196.03)
	Motor vehicle accidents	124	101	1.22	(0.93–1.60)
	Water transport accidents	5	1	4.98	(0.56–235.34)
	Air and space accidents	26	19	1.36	(0.73–2.60)
	Other vehicle accidents	0	1	0.00	(0.00–38.81)
	Accidental poisoning	14	15	0.93	(0.42–2.06)
	Accidental falls	8	8	1.00	(0.33–3.04)
	Accidents due to fire/flames	0	2	0.00	(0.00–5.30)
	Accidents due to natural environmental factors	2	2	1.00	(0.07–13.73)
	Accidents due to submersion/suffocation/foreign bodies	17	7	2.42	(0.95–6.89)
	Other accidents	32	30	1.06	(0.62–1.81)
	Late effects of accident/injury	0	2	0.00	(0.00–5.30)
	Suicide and injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted	113	108	1.04	(0.79–1.37)
	Homicide	6	5	1.19	(0.30–4.95)
	Injury resulting from the operations of war	3	4	0.75	(0.11–4.41)
	Other deaths for which coded cause data are not yet available	**9**	**12**		
	Overseas deaths for which cause data are not available	**4**	**4**		

Notes:

[1] Service and Ex-Service personnel only.

[2] Causes have been coded to the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases 9th revision (ICD-9), 1977.

[3] Includes cases with insufficient information on the death certificate to provide a known cause of death.

Table 2: Deaths due to Malignant neoplasms among UK Gulf veterans 1 April 1991–31 December 2003

Major anatomical sites and specific sites with at least 5 deaths in one of the cohorts

ICD Chapter	*Anatomical site*	*Gulf*	*Era*	*Mortality Rate Ratio*	*95% Confidence Interval*
140–149	Malignant neoplasms of lip, oral cavity and pharynx	6	4	1.49	(0.35–7.19)
150–159	Malignant neoplasms of digestive organs and peritoneum	25	31	0.80	(0.45–1.40)
	of which:				
150	Malignant neoplasms of oesophagus	9	4	2.24	(0.62–9.95)
153	Malignant neoplasms of colon	4	11	0.36	(0.08–1.22)
160–165	Malignant neoplasms of respiratory and intrathoracic organs	17	26	0.65	(0.33–1.25)
	of which:				
162	Malignant neoplasms of trachea, bronchus and lung	15	24	0.62	(0.30–1.24)
170–175	Malignant neoplasms of bone, connective tissue, skin and breast	16	14	1.14	(0.52–2.52)
	of which:				
172	Malignant neoplasms of skin	7	6	1.16	(0.33–4.18)
179–189	Malignant neoplasms of genitourinary organs	4	7	0.57	(0.12–2.24)
190–199	Malignant neoplasms of other and unspecified sites	23	31	0.74	(0.41–1.31)
	of which:				
199	Malignant neoplasms of brain	15	15	1.00	(0.45–2.18)
200–208	Malignant neoplasms of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue	21	14	1.49	(0.72–3.17)
	of which:				
200–202	Lymphomas	10	8	1.24	(0.44–3.63)
204–208	Leukaemias	9	6	1.49	(0.47–5.10)
235–239	Neoplasm of uncertain behaviour or unspecified nature	3	3	1.00	(0.13–7.43)

Written Ministerial Statements

Thursday 22 January 2004

NORTHERN IRELAND

Justice Oversight Commissioner

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Paul Murphy): The Government has received and welcomed the first report from the Justice Oversight Commissioner, the right hon. the the Lord Clyde, on the progress achieved in implementing the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review in Northern Ireland. Consistent with his terms of reference, the report was submitted to the Attorney-General, Lord Filkin, Minister for the Northern Ireland Court Service, and myself in December.

Lord Clyde concludes that the degree of progress achieved so far in the process of implementation has been significant and impressive. He also acknowledges the real commitment of the criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland to taking the recommendations forward. The Government warmly endorses these conclusions.

Copies of the Commissioner's report have been placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Medication Safety

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Ms Rosie Winterton): The Department's document "Building a safer NHS for patients: improving medication safety" has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Power Failures (London and Birmingham)

The Minister for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services (Mr. Stephen Timms): On 10 September I announced that DTI's engineering inspectorate would be launching an investigation into the power cuts that affected large areas of south London and parts of Kent on 28 August, and the West Midlands on 5 September. In particular, investigators were to check for compliance with the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002. With the agreement of the Secretary of State for Transport, the investigation also looked into the security of electricity supplies to Network Rail (Southern and Midlands Regions) and London Underground.

I also referred to the separate and independent Ofgem investigation, which is focusing on whether any of the companies involved have breached, are breaching or are likely to breach their statutory duties and/or licence conditions, and what if any enforcement action should be taken or penalty applied should a breach be found.

The engineering inspectorate investigation has now been concluded, and it has highlighted a number of issues in connection with the power cuts. The inspectors' conclusions and recommendations are being passed to the electricity companies concerned, so that they can take the necessary action to enhance the robustness of their networks, and so make such occurrences less likely. The engineering inspectorate will be holding discussions with the companies concerned and monitoring the action they take. It has powers to ensure compliance with any recommendations made.

The material the engineering inspectorate has gathered in connection with this investigation is commercially sensitive and its disclosure is restricted by the provisions of the Utilities Act 2000. Therefore the report will not be published. The recommendations and conclusions are being passed to the companies concerned on a confidential basis so that they can take the necessary action.

Once the Ofgem investigation has been concluded, it will be for the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority to make a decision as to whether there have been statutory or licence breaches, and what if any enforcement action should be taken or penalty should be imposed.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Rural White Paper

The Minister for Rural Affairs and Local Environmental Quality (Alun Michael): Following the publication of the review of the Rural White Paper, hard copies are now available in the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries. Further copies are available from DEFRA Publications, Admail 6000, London, SW1A 2XX Tel: 08459 556000 Email: defra@iforcegroup.com

HOME DEPARTMENT

Scientific Response to Terrorism

The Minister for Citizenship and Immigration (Beverley Hughes): I am today publishing the Government's reply to the Eighth Report from the Science and Technology Select Committee, Session 2002–03, on the scientific response to terrorism. The Government thank the Committee for their report of 6 November 2003. We have considered in detail the recommendations put forward. Copies of the Government's response are available in the Libraries of both Houses and can also be viewed on the Home Office website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/terrorism

Written Answers to Questions

The following answers were received between Friday 19 December 2003 and Friday 2 January 2004

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Sitting Hours

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Leader of the House how many representations have been made to his Office which are *(a)* for and *(b)* against (i) the present sitting hours of the House and (ii) September sitting of the House. [145067]

Mr. Hain: Most of the representations I have received on these matters have been oral and informal, and have not been recorded by my Office. And many could not be simply categorised as entirely for or against the changes.

TREASURY

Banking Payments System

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give new powers to the Office of Fair Trading to enable it to address competition issues within the banking payments system; and if he will make a statement. [145255]

Ruth Kelly: The Government announced in the pre-Budget Report that the Office of Fair Trading will shortly take on an enhanced role in relation to payment systems for a period of four years. The Government will not legislate to give the OFT new statutory powers to carry out this enhanced role. However, the Government will review competition in the industry after a period of four years and legislate unless there has been significant improvement. Further details on these proposals will be announced by the OFT in due course.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what evidence he has based his decision to adopt a non-legislative route to tackle competition issues within the banking payments system; and if he will make the evidence public. [145256]

Ruth Kelly: Since the publication of the Cruickshank report on Competition in UK Banking, the payments industry has made moves to address some of the competition concerns the report identified, in areas such as price transparency, wholesale pricing, access, and governance. In addition, in response to the findings of the Competition Commission report into SME banking, the OFT has negotiated agreements with the main clearing banks to improve conditions for competition and consumer choice in SME accounts. Finally, the OFT is currently investigating the interchange fee arrangements in the MasterCard credit and charge card schemes under the Competition Act 1998. The OFT will continue to use Competition Act powers where appropriate to address competition concerns in this sector.

However, the Government recognises that problems remain and that an increased focus on competition in the industry would deliver significant benefits. It believes that the OFT could provide this focus and address the remaining concerns, in advance of any legislation. The Government therefore announced in the pre-Budget Report that the Office of Fair Trading will shortly take on an enhanced role in relation to payment systems for a period of four years. The Government will then review competition in the industry and legislate unless there has been significant improvement. Further details on these proposals will be announced by the OFT in due course.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with *(a)* the banking industry and *(b)* small business organisations in relation to competition within the banking payments system. [145258]

Ruth Kelly: Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives from the banking industry and small business organisations and discuss a range of issues, including competition in payment systems.

Iraqi Money

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to trace funds which may have been deposited in UK banks by members of the former Iraqi regime; and if he will make a statement. [145198]

Ruth Kelly: All financial institutions in the UK have been obliged to identify and freeze Iraqi funds since August 1990. The implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483, 22 May 2003, subsequently required that such funds be transferred to the Development Fund for Iraq, with serious penalties for non-compliance.

While active monitoring continues, this process is now largely complete. To date the UK has transferred £112 million to support the reconstruction effort in Iraq. If further such funds were identified, they would be immediately transferred to the DFI.

Income and Corporation Taxes Act

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures have been used by the Inland Revenue to notify small businesses of their obligations under section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988; and if he will make a statement. [145233]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue's Trusts Settlements and Estates Manual is publicly available and contains some guidance on this. Further detailed guidance (with examples) of the interpretation and application of Section 660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 was published in Tax Bulletin 64 in April 2003 and was followed by further explanations and examples in November and December 2003. More guidance will be in the February edition of Tax Bulletin.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue has been raised under section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 in each of the past six years. [145234]

Dawn Primarolo: The information is not available.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact that backdating payments under section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 will have on small businesses. [145235]

Dawn Primarolo: Section 660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 applies to individuals. By paying tax under this section for earlier years individuals are simply paying the tax that would have been due if they had not sought to avoid tax.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many inquiries the Inland Revenue has received from small businesses in regard to section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. [145236]

Dawn Primarolo: The information is not available.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies have *(a)* been investigated for possible contraventions of section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 and *(b)* had action taken against them as a result in each year that the Act has been in operation. [145238]

Dawn Primarolo: None. Section 660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 applies to individuals not companies.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent information has been made available to small businesses about how section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 will be applied; and if he will make a statement. [145239]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue's Trusts Settlements and Estates Manual is publicly available and contains some guidance on this. Further detailed guidance (with examples) of the interpretation and application of Section 660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 was published in Tax Bulletin 64 in April 2003 and was followed by further explanations and examples in November and December 2003. More guidance will be in the February edition of Tax Bulletin.

National Statistics

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the *(a)* names of, *(b)* positions of and *(c)* length of pre-release access for Office for National Statistics staff, excluding those who have pre-release access to the retail sales first release and the associated briefing under the (i) pre-release access arrangements and (ii) Macro-Economic Statistic Service Level Agreement. [143374]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Dr. Vincent Cable, dated 23 December 2003:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the list of *(a)* names, *(b)* positions and *(c)* length of pre-release access for Office of National Statistics (ONS) staff, excluding those who have pre-release access to the retail sales first release and the associated briefing under the (i) pre-release access arrangements and (ii) Macro-Economic Statistic Service Level Agreement. (143374)

Pre-release access to official statistics is tightly controlled and, in the normal course of events, restricted to those who are involved in the statistical production and dissemination process. A number of staff in the ONS will, in the course of their duties, have access to the results before their public release—be they collectors, compilers, IT staff, reprographics staff, publication staff, or myself and my senior colleagues. To compile the names, positions, and length of pre-release access for all these staff, and for each release, would incur disproportionate cost.

Access has not been provided to persons in the ONS outside the list above, except where explicitly provided for in the National Statistics code of practice, and the protocol for release of statistics.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum and Immigration

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what grounds children of asylum seekers would be taken into care under his proposals to change asylum laws; [141050]

(2) who will be responsible for the care of children removed from the care of asylum seekers; [141051]

(3) whether the children of failed asylum seekers removed from their parents will be deported contemporaneously with their parents; [141052]

(4) what funding will be made available for local authorities responsible for the care of child asylum seekers. (141053)

Beverley Hughes: There is nothing in the Bill which changes in any way the grounds on which children may be taken into care. The Bill simply provides that families, illegally resident in the UK once their claims have failed, would no longer be entitled to support at the expense of the taxpayer if they refuse opportunities to leave the country. If, by putting themselves in this position, parents put their children at risk, it would be for the local authority to decide how the interests of their children should be protected under existing child protection legislation. We do not believe that many, if any, parents would put their children in this position. If this were to happen the costs would be met by central Government. We intend that in all cases the children concerned would be removed along with their parents.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact of UK immigration policies on the health services of developing countries, with particular reference to Malawi; and if he will make a statement. [144103]

Beverley Hughes: International healthcare recruitment makes a key contribution to the delivery of services in the NHS. It can also benefit the migrant and the country of origin; but in certain contexts, migration of skilled workers, including health professionals, can have negative impacts. For that reason, the Department of Health, in consultation with the Department for International Development, has published a Code of Practice for NHS employers involved in international recruitment of healthcare professionals. This seeks to ensure that developing countries such as Malawi and countries suffering significant skill shortages of their own are not targeted.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the numbers likely to be imprisoned under Clause 2 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill. [143405]

Beverley Hughes: The offence is intended to act as a strong deterrent. For anyone who nevertheless arrives undocumented without reasonable excuse, the possibility of prosecution will exist. Enforcement and prosecution guidelines will be developed for this offence.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department where, in his proposals for a new asylum and immigration appeals system, the burden of proof will lie for establishing that a person has destroyed their documents. [143472]

Paul Goggins: For the criminal offence in clause 2 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill, it will be for the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the offence of arriving undocumented has been committed. It will be a defence for the defendant to prove that he or she had a reasonable excuse for not being in possession of a document.

Clause 6 of the Bill on claimant's credibility sets out various behaviours that a deciding authority must take into account when considering an asylum or human rights claim, including the destruction of a document without reasonable explanation. It will be for the deciding authority to come to a view, based on all the relevant information (including explanations provided by the applicant), as to whether one of these behaviours is present.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his latest estimate is of the number of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom; and how many of them are illegal asylum seekers. [143516]

Beverley Hughes: Information on the total number of asylum seekers currently in the UK, including failed asylum seekers, is not available. This could be obtained only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual case records. In addition some applicants may leave the United Kingdom without informing the Immigration Service.

There is no official estimate of the size of the illegally resident population in the United Kingdom. The Government have commissioned research into the methods used in other countries to estimate the size of the illegal population in order to define methods appropriate for the UK.

The work required is challenging because, by definition, illegal migrants fall outside of official statistics and are therefore difficult to measure. People illegally present in the UK are also motivated to ensure they remain hidden, which is a challenge to conducting research.

The number of cases (principal applicants) awaiting initial decision or awaiting appeal determinations continues to fall as the level of applications falls, initial decisions continue to outstrip the number of applications, and record numbers of appeals are determined by the IAA.

Information on asylum applications is published quarterly. The next publication will be available at the end of February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of asylum applicants granted *(a)* asylum, *(b)* exceptional leave to remain, *(c)* humanitarian protection and *(d)* discretionary leave arrived in the United Kingdom without travel documents or other identity documentation in the last year for which figures are available. [143600]

Beverley Hughes: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, management information indicates that, in the first half of 2003, undocumented arrivals (which may include dependants) represented in the region of 70 per cent. of port asylum cases.

Information on asylum initial decisions is published quarterly. The next publication will be available at the end of February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many instances there have been of asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo being deported to their homeland and refused entry in the last five years. [143676]

Beverley Hughes: Information on the number of failed asylum seekers who were returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and subsequently refused entry there is not available. However, the Immigration Service does not attempt to effect an individual's removal unless it is satisfied that the individual concerned is assured of entry in their final destination.

Deportations are a specific subset of removals alongside persons subject to administrative removal, removal due to illegal entry action or those refused entry at port and subsequently removed. Information on the nationality of those people removed as a result of deportation action is not available.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many failed asylum seekers have been deported to Gaza in each of the last 12 months; and to which *(a)* ports and *(b)* airports they were returned. [143856]

Beverley Hughes: I regret that this information is not available. It is not possible to identify separately Gaza within the available statistics on removals of unsuccessful asylum seekers from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been refused support in each of the last six months under section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. [143857]

Beverley Hughes: The information is not available in the form requested.

Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 came into force on 8 January 2003, restricting the availability of NASS support to those asylum seekers who make an asylum application as soon as reasonably practicable.

Figures in respect of asylum seekers refused under Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 are for each quarter:

	Number of cases refused under Section 55 of the NIA Act 2002
2003	
Quarter 1	2,850
Quarter 2	1,830
Quarter 3	2,810

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many failed asylum seekers from *(a)* Somalia, *(b)* Afghanistan and *(c)* Iraq have been deported in each of the last six months. [143858]

Beverley Hughes: Deportations are a specific subset of removals alongside persons subject to administrative removal, removal due to illegal entry action or those refused entry at port and subsequently removed.

Estimates of the number of nationals of Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq who had sought asylum at some stage and who were removed between January and June 2003 are shown in the table. These figures include persons departing 'voluntarily' after the initiation of enforcement action against them, and persons leaving under Assisted Voluntary Returns Programmes run by the International Organization for Migration.

Removals and voluntary[1] departures of asylum applicants, excluding dependants, of Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, January to June 2003[2,3,4]

Nationality	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*Total*
Afghanistan	20	15	30	45	60	40	210
Iraq	20	35	40	45	25	20	175
Somalia	*	5	*	*	5	5	25

[1] Includes persons departing "voluntarily" after enforcement action had been initiated against them, persons leaving under Assisted voluntary return programmes run by the International Organisation for Migration, and removals on safe third country grounds.
[2] Figures rounded to the nearest five with * = 1 or 2.
[3] Data have been estimated due to data quality issues
[4] Provisional figures

Information on the nationality of asylum seekers removed from the United Kingdom during the third quarter of 2003 will be published at the end of February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with which countries the *(a)* UK and *(b)* EU has agreements concerning the re-documentation of illegal immigrants found in the UK. [141553]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 4 December 2003]:* Re-documentation agreements are not necessary to enable us to return to most countries. Wherever possible (and this is the case with more than 160 countries), we return using the EU laissez passer, because this is the simplest and quickest approach. But where third countries do not accept the EU letter, we have sought to conclude a range of informal or formal agreements.

The UK signed its first three bilateral readmission agreements with Romania and Bulgaria in February 2003 and Albania in October 2003. These agreements are due to enter into force in 2004. We will continue to negotiate bilateral readmission agreements and less formal re-documentation arrangements in order to facilitate removals operations.

In addition, at EU level, the Commission has been authorised by the Council to negotiate Community readmission agreements with 11 third countries: Morocco, Sri Lanka, Russia, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Macao, Ukraine, Albania, Algeria, China and Turkey. The first of these is due to enter force in 2004.

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegal entrants have been discovered at *(a)* Dover and *(b)* other UK ports in the last 12 months; and what percentage have been removed forthwith. [142162]

Beverley Hughes: Locally collated, provisional management information, which may be subject to change, indicates that 2,950 illegal entrants were detected at or close to the port of Dover having entered clandestinely between 1 January 2003 and 30 September 2003. 7.9 per cent. of those detected, 230 did not claim asylum and were speedily removed to their continental port of embarkation. In the corresponding period during 2002, before the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act was passed, and before we put in place a wide range of measures, including deployment of new detection technology and enhanced juxtaposed controls, there were 8,370 detections of which 4 per cent., 340 did not claim asylum and were removed immediately.

Similar information for ports outside of Dover indicates that 280 were dealt as clandestine illegal entrants between January and September 2003. We do not routinely break down the percentage who do not claim asylum and who are immediately removed.

We expect that the phased implementation of full juxtaposed controls will further reduce the number of people able to enter the UK illegally.

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of UK ports have more than 10 full-time UK immigration officials in post. [142163]

Beverley Hughes: As of the 1 September 2003, there were 3,119 full-time equivalent Immigration Officers employed by the UK Immigration Service. Of these 2,394 Immigration Officers were deployed at the UK ports of entry.

The remainder were engaged in other immigration activity, including enforcement, intelligence gathering and detention.

At 33 points of entry into the UK where the Immigration Service has permanent staff a total of 26 ports, 79 per cent. have more than 10 full-time Immigration officials in post.

Where there is no permanent presence at ports Immigration Officers attend on a risk-assessed, intelligence-led basis.

Child Protection Referrals

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many child protection referrals have been made to local area child protection committees by each young offender institution since January. [144364]

Paul Goggins: Data on the number of child protection referrals made to local area child protection committees from each juvenile establishment since January 2003 are shown in the following table:

Establishment	*Number of child protection referrals*
Ashfield	20
Brinsford	47
Brockhill	0
Bullwood Hall	11
Castington	16
Eastwood Park	5
Feltham	51
Hindley	[1]
Holloway	9
Huntercombe	6
Lancaster Farms	4
New Hall	5
Onley	19
Parc	24
Stoke Heath	[1]
Thorn Cross	0
Warren Hill	11
Werrington	43
Wetherby	15

[1] Figures not currently available

Corporate Killing

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the likely impact of a corporate killing Bill on British business. [142841]

Paul Goggins: The results of the Regulatory Impact Assessment are still being assessed but the preliminary indications are that the costs of a change in the law will not be large. As we have made clear, no new burdens will be placed on companies in terms of the standards with which they will be legally required to comply. We will continue to refine the RIA in the context of our proposals for legislation.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 30 October from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs. J. Ferns. [142954]

Mr. Blunkett: I responded to my right hon. Friend on 16 December 2003.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham of 15 September, reference PO 13772/3. [144160]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 16 December 2003]:* I replied to the hon. Member on 17 December 2003.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs. R. Amjad. [144647]

Mr. Blunkett: I responded to my right hon. Friend on 12 December 2003.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Riaz Amer. [144648]

Mr. Blunkett: I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 12 December 2003.

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

Ross Cranston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to place the findings of the 2002 exercise on crime and disorder reduction partnerships and their implications for nuisance and noise associated with fireworks in the Library; whether he has conducted a similar exercise for 2003; and if he will make a statement. [143912]

Ms Blears: I have placed copies of the Home Office Fireworks Monitoring Report in the Libraries of the House today. We have no plans at present to repeat this exercise.

Custody Death Investigations

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to ensure that investigations into deaths in prison or police custody are *(a)* independent, *(b)* thorough, *(c)* in compliance with relevant mental health standards and *(d)* respond to the concerns of the families of the deceased. [142885]

Paul Goggins: An external team investigates all deaths in prison custody. Out of area investigations are recommended as good practice. A review of investigations into deaths in custody has resulted in some investigations being led by an investigator independent of the Prison Service or with the support of a multi-agency advisory panel. In two recent cases the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman has been commissioned to conduct an investigation and plans are in hand to transfer the function to him.

Prison Service staff leading investigations into deaths in custody attend two training courses, the first covering investigations generally and the second dealing specifically with investigating deaths in custody. Two detailed and comprehensive Prison Service Orders (1300 "Investigations" and 1301 "Investigating death in custody") provide guidance and advice to ensure that investigations are thorough.

Through its partnership with the Department of Health, the Prison Service is working to establish links locally and nationally with the National Institute Mental Health England (NIMHE) in implementing Standard Seven "Preventing Suicide" of the National

Service Framework for Mental Health published in 1999. Learning lessons and changing practice as a result of the thorough investigations that follow a death in custody is a key factor in this framework.

Investigators always offer to meet bereaved families and investigation reports are disclosed to families in consultation with the Coroner before the inquest. In order to provide greater insight and explanation for bereaved families, investigators are now required to include families in the investigation process.

Deaths in police custody are subject to investigation under the statutory complaints system set out in the Police Act 1996 and police forces voluntarily refer all such deaths to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) to oversee the investigations undertaken.

Under the provisions of the Police Reform Act 2002, a new police complaints system will be implemented on 1 April 2004. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) will replace the Police Complaints Authority. Under the new system, all deaths in police custody which involve potential misconduct from a member of a police force must be referred to the IPCC, whether or not a complaint has been made.

Depending on the circumstances of the case, the IPCC can investigate the incident using its own investigators, or it can choose to manage or supervise a police investigation. The IPCC and the police will have all the necessary powers and will be expected to conduct thorough investigations which comply with all relevant standards.

Complainants and other interested persons—including family members—will have the opportunity to participate in the conduct of an investigation and will have a right to be kept informed of its progress and outcome.

Highly Skilled Migrants

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many highly skilled migrants have been accepted in each year since the inception of the highly skilled migrant programme, broken down by country. [140703]

Beverley Hughes: The highly skilled migrant programme was launched on 28 January 2002. As at 30 November 2003 a total of 8,628 applications have been received. From 28 January to 31 December 2002—1,194 applications were approved. From 1 January to 30 November 2003—3,864 applications have been approved.

Current management information limitations do not, at present, provide a breakdown in the format requested. However, up to 30 August 2003 the number of applications received for the top 10 nationalities were as follows:

India—832
United States of America—751
Nigeria—454
Pakistan—381
South Africa—319
Australia—307
Zimbabwe—176
Canada—153
China People's Republic of—126
Russia—123

Identity Fraud

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals have been *(a)* arrested, *(b)* charged and *(c)* convicted as a result of the actions taken by the Immigration Crime Team against suspected identity hijackers on 8 October 2002; what the sentence was in each case; and how many passports were recovered in the operation. [143381]

Beverley Hughes: Operation Wisdom, targeting individuals who have obtained passports using the identities of dead children, was co-ordinated by the National Crime Squad and involved 18 UK police forces and the Immigration Service.

On 8 October 2002, 30 individuals were arrested, 12 were charged and 16 others were identified as suitable for removal under Immigration Act powers, five of whom received police cautions. Sentences for others on conviction ranged from seven days to 11 months.

Some 100 further arrests have since been made as the result of on-going work by the agencies involved.

No central record was kept of the number of passports recovered in the operation.

Judicial Review

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which decisions by his Department were challenged by judicial review in each session since 1997; and in how many cases the *(a)* Department's decision was upheld by the court, *(b)* court found for the applicant, *(c)* Department submitted to the judgment and *(d)* Department appealed successfully against the decision. [143410]

Beverley Hughes: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile prisoners have been refused early release on home detention curfew because they had no suitable accommodation in each of the last 12 months. [144353]

Paul Goggins: Data on the reasons for juvenile prisoners being refused early release on home detention curfew are not collected centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been transferred out of secure training centres to prisons for reasons of bad behaviour in each of the last 12 months. [144354]

Paul Goggins: The following table shows the number of juveniles transferred from Secure Training Centres to Young Offender Institutions for reasons of bad behaviour in each of the last 12 months.

Month	Number of children transferred
December 2002	0
2003	
January	1
February	3
March	3
April	4
May	0
June	0
July	5
August	5
September	1
October	4
November	2

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the use of special cells in young offender institutions; and if he will place copies in the Library. [144362]

Paul Goggins: The Home Office has only received letters from Amnesty International regarding the use of solitary confinement for juveniles. These letters are private correspondence and cannot be placed in the Library without the consent of the originator.

Paedophiles

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there have been of paedophiles as a result of photographs taken of children at *(a)* school nativity plays, *(b)* school sports days, *(c)* other community based sport activities, *(d)* school drama and cultural activities and *(e)* other community based drama and cultural activities in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [143950]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 16 December 2003]:* The information requested is not available centrally.

There is no definitive list of offences relating to paedophilia. The information collected centrally simply relates to a range of offences (including those involving direct contact with the victims and others that do not) against victims of a variety of ages, some of which span the legal age of consent to sexual activity, and details of the nature of the offences are not collected.

Prison Education

Stephen Hesford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent progress has been made in improving adult prisoner *(a)* literacy and *(b)* numeracy. [142923]

Paul Goggins: Since April 2003, prisoners have achieved around 28,000 qualifications in literacy, language and numeracy. At this rate, the 2003–04 target of 36,600 qualifications will be exceeded by March 2004. As a result prisons have been set an ambitious but achievable target of 60,000 basic skills qualifications for 2004–05.

Prisons (Suicide Prevention)

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the budgets of HM Prison Service establishments holding females has been specifically dedicated to suicide prevention in each of the past 10 years. [142891]

Paul Goggins: The Prison Service's efforts to reduce the numbers of self-inflicted deaths in prisons are supported by a number of broader strategies for which money is allocated at a national level. It is not, therefore possible to identify the resources that have been allocated to suicide prevention specifically.

A proactive three-year programme to develop policies and practices to reduce prisoner suicide and manage self-harm in prisons commenced in April 2001. The main principles of the strategy apply across all types of prisons and prisoners whether male or female. An investment of over £21 million through the three-year programme is enabling physical improvements (now 75 per cent. complete) to be made at six 'Safer Local' pilot sites, one of which is the women's prison and YOI Eastwood Park. At Eastwood Park where there is a centrally funded Project Manager, £1.5 million has been dedicated to Reception and the Healthcare Centre, while a further £1.5 million is being spent on installing safer cells (cells which contain specially designed furniture and fixtures which are manufactured and installed to make the attachment of ligatures very difficult).

A targeted and separate suicide prevention and self-harm management strategy is being developed specifically for women prisoners. In addition £1 million from the Department of Health has been allocated to the Women's Estate to be spent on the recruitment of psychiatric nurses, and 11 out of the 17 prisons for women now have mental health in-reach facilities.

Brockhill, Eastwood Park, Holloway, New Hall and Styal prisons were among the first establishments to have full-time, dedicated Suicide Prevention Co-ordinators (SPCs). All women's prisons now have a designated full-time or part-time SPC. All women's establishments deliver suicide awareness training to staff.

Sexual Offences

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on *(a)* offences for which sexual activity in public lavatories may be prosecuted and *(b)* the suitability of those offences for dealing with such behaviour. [143478]

Paul Goggins: Sexual activity in public lavatories will be covered by a specific new offence in section 71 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Persons engaging in such activity may also commit the existing common law offence of outraging public decency or an offence under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. The Government believe that sexual activity in public lavatories is unacceptable and the new offence will cover any activity that:

> "a reasonable person would, in all the circumstances but regardless of any person's purpose, consider to be sexual".

The maximum penalty will be six months imprisonment, or a level five fine, or both.

The new offence will not require that someone should be caused "alarm, distress, or offence" by the activity, which is a requirement of section 5 of the Public Order Act. Similarly, the common law offence contains a requirement that the conduct must be lewd, obscene or disgusting. While it is a requirement that it should not be inordinate, the common law offence does not have a maximum penalty and so could be used to prosecute more serious cases where the conduct is particularly unacceptable. This offence has been made triable summarily, as well on indictment, by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 which should give greater flexibility in its use.

Terrorism

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the total cost to date has been of detaining suspects held under Part 4 of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. [144583]

Paul Goggins: The approximate cost from 19 December 2001 to 16 December 2003 of detaining those held under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 is £905,000.

The cost of holding a detainee in prison is equivalent to the cost of holding a prisoner in the same establishment.

Unregistered Ships

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been stopped trying to enter the United Kingdom on unregistered ships in each of the last 10 years. [140672]

Beverley Hughes: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only by examination of individual case-files at disproportionate cost.

Women Prisoners

Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that gender specific suicide and self-harm figures are *(a)* reported to Parliament and *(b)* monitored by the Women's Estate Policy Unit. [144541]

Paul Goggins: Women's Estate Policy Unit monitor female prisoner suicide and self-harm figures, and will be producing a report for 2003–04 which will be lodged in the Library.

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under HM Prison Service's plans to manage the Women's Prison Estate geographically instead of functionally *(a)* what safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the needs of women prisoners are responded to appropriately, *(b)* what steps he will take to ensure that the budget set aside for the operational group remains ring-fenced for work with women in prison and *(c)* what specialist staff, with particular reference to those with skills and experience in suicide and self-harm prevention, mental health and detoxification for women will be maintained. [141621]

Paul Goggins: The Director of Operations will formally take responsibility for the Women's Estate from 1 January 2004 in order to facilitate a smooth transfer to the new arrangements on 1 April 2004. The Prison Service will retain a dedicated policy and management group to ensure that the needs of women prisoners are met across the prisons estate. The Director of Operations will hold responsibility for the work of that group which will be headed by a senior operational manager who reports directly to him. The new management structure will be appropriately funded to reflect the particular needs of women in custody.

The details of the staffing arrangements for the new structure are still being worked out but the women's policy and management group will include specialist staff with knowledge and skills in the prevention of suicide and self-harm and in the treatment of drug abuse and mental illness.

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of children under 18 years of age whose mothers are in prison, where the mother is the child's primary carer. [141625]

Paul Goggins: The most recent information available on this matter is derived from a survey of 301 white and Afro-Caribbean (or mixed-race) female prisoners who were drug users. This survey was carried out in 2001 and published in 2003. It showed that 70 per cent. (211) had children under the age of 18. Between them, the 211 mothers had 473 children. This suggests that, for every female prisoner, there are roughly 1.5 children in the community. The same survey also indicates that, prior to going to prison, 60 per cent. of the female prisoners who were mothers had been looking after their children at home.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to survey the women's prison population to determine prisoners' home locations in order to facilitate resettlement. [142887]

Paul Goggins: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a Question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Redcar (Vera Baird) on 8 December 2003 (141620).

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the Government's strategy is for improving the level of support available to prisoners who have been victims of *(a)* domestic violence and *(b)* sexual abuse. [142888]

Paul Goggins: A range of support is offered to prisoners who report that they have been victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse. This includes: individual support and/or counselling; the provision of advice or information; and referral to appropriate outside agencies.

The Prison Service is currently seeking to improve the level of support offered. The specific initiatives include drawing up good practice principles for support services; developing links with community agencies and ensuring that assessment of risk is included in the sentence planning process.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in extending the First Night in Custody Project from HMP Holloway to all female prison establishments. [142896]

Paul Goggins: The First Night in Custody Project at Holloway prison is part of a range of interventions across the women's prisons estate designed to reduce levels of suicide and self-harm as well as provide support and advice for women with a range of family, housing and other personal issues. These interventions are focused on prisons with a local function. There is no single model; the way in which the programme is delivered reflects local needs and circumstances, but important lessons have been learned from the Holloway project.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the female prisoners who committed suicide had previously been identified as at risk through the use of the HM Prison Service form F2052SH in each of the past four years. [142897]

Paul Goggins: All of the women who took their own lives in prison from 1 January 1999 up to 8 December 2003 had been on an open F2052SH (self-harm at risk form) at some point during their period of imprisonment. The number of these women who were on an open F2052SH at the times of their deaths is shown in the following table.

Calendar year	*Number of female self-inflicted deaths (SIDs)* [1]	*Number of female SIDs on an open F2052SH at the times of their deaths*	*Proportion of female SIDs on an open F2052SH at the times of their deaths (per cent.)*
1999	5	2	40
2000	8	3	38
2001	6	4	67
2002	9	3	33
2003[2]	14	9	64
Total	42	21	50

[1] The Prison Service employs the term 'self-inflicted death' rather than 'suicide'. This includes all those deaths where it appears the person may have acted specifically to take his/her own life
[2] To 8 December 2003

The general prison population, and the women's estate in particular, contains a very large number of prisoners exhibiting a combination of factors which raise their risk of suicide: these include psychiatric disorders, relationship problems, previous abuse and family background problems; and histories of self-harm, drug and alcohol abuse and homelessness. As women tend to be the primary carers in their families, concerns about child care arrangements and associated issues also come to the fore with imprisonment.

Any member of staff who has cause for concern that a prisoner may be at-risk can open an F2052SH and it is mandatory to open an F2052SH following any incident of self-harm. The inherent vulnerability of many women in custody, combined with the high levels of self-harm in the women's estate, results in a very large number of women prisoners presenting themselves as requiring special care, and being made subject to F2052SH procedures. However, staff caring for women prisoners face exceptional difficulties in distinguishing between those women who are intensely vulnerable and those who may be actively suicidal.

To address this issue, the F2052SH system is under review. The pilot of a replacement care planning system will begin in January 2004 at five establishments, one of which is the women's prison and YOI Low Newton. The potential replacement for the F2052SH aims to build on the successful aspects of the existing system, yet be more flexible and task teams of specially trained staff to assess the level of risk that at-risk prisoners present.

In parallel with the review of the F2052SH, information booklets and posters to improve staff understanding of the issues surrounding self-harm have been widely distributed, and detailed guidance for staff on how to manage and care for prisoners who self-harm, as well as a video discussing self-harm, are under development.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure *(a)* that women prisoners have equal access to bail information and *(b)* that the information available is consistent and accurate. [142898]

Paul Goggins: All the remand prisons in both the male and the female estate have bail information schemes through which all new remand prisoners are made aware of the help available. All female remand prisoners have equal access to bail information schemes and assistance in seeking bail.

Bail information schemes provide information to courts to assist with decisions on individual prisoner's bail applications. The information provided will therefore vary from prisoner to prisoner, but in each case the information must be verified as accurate before being sent to the court.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what counselling and support is available in women's prisons to assist prisoners who have been victims of *(a)* domestic violence and *(b)* sexual abuse. [142886]

Paul Goggins: A survey carried out by the Prison Service in 2003 demonstrates that a wide range of support is given across the prison estate to women who report that they have been abused. This includes offering women individual support and/or counselling; the provision of advice and information and referral to appropriate outside agencies. Individual establishments work closely with local community agencies with specialist expertise in abuse issues. The support offered to individual women who report that they have suffered any kind of abuse and have asked for help, will be determined following a full assessment of their needs.

The support offered varies between establishments and reflects local circumstances. The Prison Service is currently working with a small group of local practitioners, including both prison staff and voluntary agencies, to develop good practice principles so that consistency in the standard of support offered can be achieved. This work will be completed by March 2004 and will draw on a recently published literature review by Carol-Ann Hooper (2003), from the University of York on "Abuse, Interventions and Women in Prison".

In addition, examples of specific work being done for women who are the victims of domestic violence include working to help women avoid going back into

circumstances that are high risk for violence when they are released and the provision in many establishments of posters/helpline information supplied by local domestic violence networks.

Working Holidaymakers

Dr. Evan Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many working holidaymakers have been accepted in each of the last two years for which figures are available, broken down by country of origin. [140702]

Beverley Hughes: Information on the number of working holidaymakers admitted to the United Kingdom, during 2001 and 2002, is given in the table.

Passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom as working holidaymakers, by nationality, 2001 to 2002[1]

	Total	*Australia*	*Canada*	*New Zealand*	*South Africa*	*Others*
2001	35,775	16,820	2,885	5,295	8,830	1,945
2002[1]	41,700	17,175	3,205	4,935	13,235	3,150

[1] Provisional

Note:
Data rounded to nearest five.

DEFENCE

"Delivering Security in a Changing World"

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect on Northern Ireland of the Defence White Paper, "Delivering Security in a Changing World"; and if he will make a statement. [145075]

Mr. Hoon: The Defence White Paper sets out our analysis of the future security environment, its implications for defence, and how we intend to adapt our planning and force structures to meet the potential threats. It says:

> "The Armed Forces will continue to support the Police Service for Northern Ireland's public order and counter-terrorist operations for as long as they are needed. We will reduce the level of forces committed to this task as soon as the improving security situation and the capability and confidence of the PSNI allow.
>
> Ultimately, our aim is to achieve a situation where an element of our deployable force structure is permanently based in Northern Ireland, just as throughout the rest of the United Kingdom."

Aircraft Carriers

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the plan to reduce the size of the two Royal Navy aircraft carriers. [144685]

Mr. Ingram: Final decisions have yet to be taken on the main specifications for CVF. The programme is currently in its Assessment Phase, which is aimed at increasing the maturity of the design as well as optimising capability and value for money. The size of the vessels will continue to evolve as the design matures to meet the required capability.

Armoured Vehicles

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the operational availability is of *(a)* FV430 series, *(b)* CVR (T) and *(c)* Saxon, broken down by unit; and what the overall availability targets are for these vehicles. [144131]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Arms Contracts

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the allegations of fraud and bribery in relation to the Al Yamamah arms contracts. [145217]

Mr. Ingram: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 3 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 429W, to the hon. Members for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) and for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb).

Army Strength

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the present shortfall is in army personnel. [144800]

Mr. Caplin: The strengths and requirements of the Army are available in Tri-Service Publication (TSP) Number 3 entitled UK "Armed Forces Strengths and Trained Requirements"

A copy of the publication is available in the House of Commons Library.

The most recent copy contains details as at 1 November 2003.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the current deployed strength is of *(a)* Queen's Royal Hussars, *(b)* 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry, *(c)* 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales, *(d)* 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, *(e)* 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots, *(f)* 26 Regiment Royal Artillery and *(g)* 35 Engineer Regiment. [144130]

Mr. Ingram: As at 11 December 2003, the deployed strength of the above units was as follows:

Unit	*Deployed strength*
Queen's Royal Hussars	517
1st Battalion, The Light Infantry	773
1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales	556
2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment	516
1st Battalion, The Royal Scots	330
26 Regiment, Royal Artillery	490
35 Engineer Regiment	668

Attitude Surveys

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey responded *(a)* A great deal, *(b)* Quite a lot, *(c)* Partly, *(d)* Not very much and *(e)* Not at all to Question 21; and if he will make a statement. [143619]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey.

	Number	*Percentage*
Royal Navy		
Great deal	179	19.40
Quite a lot	407	44
Partly	268	29
Not very much	49	5
Not at all	8	0.90
Total	911	98.50
Royal Marines		
Great deal	14	17.10
Quite a lot	37	45
Partly	23	28
Not very much	6	7
Not at all	2	2.40
Total	82	100.00

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey responded Yes to Question 25.4; and if he will make a statement. [143620]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey.

I should point out that question 25.4 in the September 2002 survey appears as question 29.2 in the last assessed survey.

	Number	*Percentage*
Royal Navy		
Yes	58	6.30
Responses	907	98.10
Royal Marines		
Yes	6	7.30
Responses	80	97.60

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey who responded Yes to Question 25.4 then responded *(a)* I do not think people would believe me, *(b)* I was worried that there would be recriminations from the perpetrator*(s)*, *(c)* I was worried that if I reported it the problem would get worse, *(d)* I did not believe anything would be done about it, *(e)* I was worried that reporting it might affect my career and *(f)* I considered the incident(s) to be too minor to report to Question 28; how many respondents identified (i) one, (ii) two, (iii) three, (iv) four and (v) five of the possible options; and if he will make a statement. [143622]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey. I should point out that question 28 in the September 2002 survey appears as Question 32 in the last assessed survey.

Royal Navy

	Number	*Percentage*
a. I did not think people would believe me	38	9.90
b. Worried about recriminations from the perpetrators	43	11.20
c. Worried the problem would get worse	Not an option in May 2003 CAS	
d. Did not believe anything would be done about it	64	16.70
e. I was worried reporting it might effect my career	64	16.70
f. I considered the incident too minor to report	59	15.40
Total number of responses to all options—383		

Royal Marines

	Number	*Percentage*
a. I did not think people would believe me	1	3.40
b. Worried about recriminations from the perpetrators	5	17.20
c. Worried the problem would get worse	Not an option in May 2003 CAS	
d. Did not believe anything would be done about it	5	17.20
e. I was worried reporting it might affect my career	5	17.20
f. I considered the incident too minor to report	5	17.20
Total number of responses to all options—29		

Breakdown in terms of single and multiple options

	Number
Royal Navy	
1 option	70
2 options	20
3 options	35
4 options	9
5 options	14
Royal Marines	
1 option	9
2 options	1
3 options	1
4 options	0
5 options	0

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey responded *(a)* Very satisfied, *(b)* Satisfied, *(c)* Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, *(d)* Dissatisfied and *(e)* Very dissatisfied, to (i) Question 4, (ii) Question 7, (iii) Question 10, (iv) Question 11, (v) Question 12, (vi) Question 38, (vii) Question 39, (viii) Question 40 and (ix) Question 42; and if he will make a statement. [143624]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey:

Royal Navy

	Very satisfied %	Satisfied %	Neither %	Dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %	Total responses
Q4	12.50	47.60	23	11.70	4	925
Q7	8.20	33.40	25.40	16.40	12.60	925
Q10	4	37.30	32.60	18.80	6.20	925
Q11	36.20	49.10	10.70	2.80	0.90	925
Q12	5.00	31.50	26.20	21.30	15.20	925
Q38	2.40	24.80	19.20	35.10	18.30	925
Q39	1.70	25.70	21.60	34.80	15.50	925
Q40	1.60	24	22.20	34.60	17.30	925
Q42	4	40.40	33.30	16.50	4.80	925

Royal Marines

	Very satisfied %	Satisfied %	Neither %	Dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %	Total responses
Q4	12.20	40.20	29	11.00	7	82
Q7[1]	3.70	36.60	34.10	7.30	1.20	82
Q10	6	36.60	28.00	22.00	7.30	82
Q11	37.80	51.20	9.80	0.00	1.20	82
Q12	1.20	31.70	30.50	20.70	14.60	82
Q38	0.00	26.80	23.20	26.80	23.20	82
Q39	0.00	19.50	25.60	37.80	17.10	82
Q40	0.00	17	31.70	30.50	20.70	82
Q42	0	23.20	48.80	14.60	3.70	82

[1] At the time of the administration of the survey, Minimum Time Ashore applied to rates from Leading Hand to Warrant Officer only, Able rates being governed by Separated Service guidelines.
From 1 April 2004 the Separated Service guidelines will apply to all.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey responded *(a)* I am leaving and I have already given notice, *(b)* I am planning to leave but I have not yet given notice and *(c)* I am considering giving notice to Question 17; and if he will make a statement. [143625]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey:

Intentions with regard to future career in Royal Navy/Royal Marines.

	Number	Percentage
Royal Navy		
I am leaving and have already given notice	28	3.00
I am planning to leave but I have not yet given notice	53	5.70
I am considering giving notice	75	8.10
Royal Marines		
I am leaving and have already given notice	3	3.70
I am planning to leave but I have not yet given notice	14	4.90
I am considering giving notice	12	14.60

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey responded *(a)* 70, *(b)* 77 and *(c)* 82 to Question 18; what the five reasons most often cited under "Other" were; how many respondents ticked (i) two and (ii) all three of the above answers; and if he will make a statement. [143626]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey:

	Number	Percentage
Royal Navy		
(a) No. 70—Had always intended to leave after this period of time	21	5
(b) No. 77—Wish to take up another career	81	19.50
(c) No. 82—Other	71	17.10
Royal Marines		
(a) No. 70—Had always intended to leave after this period of time	1	2.30
(b) No. 77—Wish to take up another career	10	23.30
(c) No. 82—Other	7	16.30

The total number of responses to all options—456.

Respondents ticking (i) two and (ii) all three of the above answers:

	(i)	(ii)
Royal Navy	36	6
Royal Marines	0	1

Five external reasons most often cited under the "Other" option:

	Number
Royal Navy	
1. General disillusionment/dissatisfaction with lifestyle	19
2. Concern about marriage and children/life outside of work	11
3. Pay	9
4. Promotion prospects	8
5. RN has changed for the worse	6
Royal Marines	
1. Dissatisfaction with lifestyle	3
2. Concern about marriage and children/life outside of work	1
3. Job satisfaction	1
4. Promotion prospects	1
5. To travel	1

Chemical Weapons (United Kingdom)

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of chemical weapons are stored in the UK; whether Agent Orange has ever been *(a)* stored in the UK and *(b)* used by UK forces; and if he will make a statement. [145028]

Mr. Hoon: The United Kingdom gave up its offensive chemical weapons programmes in 1956. No chemical weapons are stored in the United Kingdom. However, from time to time old chemical weapons from the Second World War, and before, are recovered. These are taken to Dstl Porton Down where they are declared to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and then destroyed in accordance with our obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The United Kingdom does not possess Agent Orange. As far as can be ascertained from historical records, it has never been used by UK forces and has not been stored in the UK.

Decommissioning (UK Naval Ships)

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the Government's policy is regarding the break-up, recovery and recycling of United Kingdom naval vessels; [143887]

(2) which United Kingdom naval vessels have been broken up over the past five years; and where each vessel was broken up; [143888]

(3) which United Kingdom naval vessels are being considered for breaking up; [143889]

(4) what criteria are used to determine where work to break up United Kingdom naval vessels is carried out. [143890]

Mr. Ingram: When declared surplus to requirements, named RN ships are sold via the Ministry of Defence's Disposal Services Agency (DSA). The DSA actively promotes sales on a Government-to-Government basis but, if a buyer cannot be found, vessels may be sold by means of a competitive tender exercise and bidders may include parties interested in scrapping the vessels. Of all the vessels sold over the past five years, the following (including Royal Fleet Auxiliaries) were sold for breaking:

	Financial year	*Scrapped in:*
HMS Birmingham	2000–01	Spain
HMS Beaver	2000–01	Turkey
RFA Olwen	2000–01	India
RFA Olna	2000–01	India

When disposing of surplus vessels, the Government's policy is to comply with all national and international environmental legislation (including the Basel Convention) while ensuring the maximum return for the taxpayer.

The DSA is currently examining disposal options for HMS Intrepid, one of which is a sale for scrapping overseas.

Defence Fire Service

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Defence Fire Service stations located in Scotland; how many *(a)* civilian personnel and *(b)* service personnel are employed at each; how many have been employed at each in each year since 1997; what the personnel costs were for (i) each of the stations, (ii) the DFS in Scotland and (iii) the DFS in total in each year since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [143564]

Mr. Ingram: The Defence Fire Service stations located in Scotland are completely manned by civilian personnel. The locations and numbers employed at each station since 1997–98 are shown in the following table.

	Numbers of Personnel						
	1997–98	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*	*2003–04*
Faslane	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
Coulport	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
East Riggs	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Lossiemouth	29	30	30	30	30	30	30
Leuchars	49	49	49	49	45	44	37

In addition there are three other stations at RAF Buchan, RAF Kinloss and RAF Saxa Vord which are manned by service personnel.

I will write to the hon. Member with details of the number of service personnel and personnel costs and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Depleted Uranium

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Depleted Uranium Oversight Board was first set up. [144020]

Mr. Caplin: The formation of the Depleted Uranium Oversight Board (DUOB) was announced by the then Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) on 26 September 2001. The first meeting took place on 27 September 2001. Details of the Oversight Board including all minutes to meetings since September 2001 can be found on its website at www.duob.org.uk.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what health and safety guidance is given to Service men and women in relation to their work where areas may be contaminated with depleted uranium; and if he will make a statement. [144105]

Mr. Caplin: As required by the United Kingdom health and safety legislation, specific instructions are prepared for each operation or situation in which MOD Service or civilian personnel may encounter depleted

uranium contamination. The instructions issued for the recent deployment to Iraq (Operation Telic) are on the Department's website at: www.mod.uk/issues/depleted_uranium/gulf_safety_instructions.htm

Earlier safety guidance is also on the Department's website at: www.mod.uk/linked_files/gulf_du_safety_guidance.pdf

Equipment Upgrades

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there will be further investment in and upgrades of *(a)* SkyNet 5, *(b)* Bowman, *(c)* Falcon and *(d)* Watchkeeper. [144687]

Mr. Ingram: All of these equipment projects are due to come into service on an incremental basis in the period from 2004 to the end of the decade. Our first priority is to ensure that the currently planned capability (including planned upgrades where appropriate) is brought into service on time and to cost. We keep all our equipment capability requirements under review and will consider making further investment in, and upgrades to, these assets if that were the best way of meeting our future capability requirements. For Skynet 5, where we have contracted for service provision for a period of 15 years under PFI arrangements, the contractor will need to invest to meet his service obligations and is incentivised to provide technology refresh during the course of the contract.

Fair Trade Products

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is the policy of his Department to use fair trade products, as a matter of course, in *(a)* sales on Departmental premises and *(b)* receptions and meetings involving staff and visitors. [142802]

Mr. Ingram: The Government are committed to supporting ethical trading wherever possible, and provide support to the Fair Trade Foundation's efforts in promoting the supply and marketing of Fairtrade products, but does not provide specific advice on this issue to departments. The Ministry of Defence does not have a specific policy related to the use of these products.

Future Rapid Effects Systems

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the plan to procure future rapid effects systems, with particular reference to *(a)* costs, *(b)* efficiency and *(c)* potential for storage. [144684]

Mr. Ingram: The future Rapid Effects System project is currently in the Concept Phase. The Department is considering how best to take forward the requirement and will have regard to all relevant factors in determining the future direction of the programme.

Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement on the contract for the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft project. [144698]

Mr. Ingram: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 9 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 356W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Hoyle).

Harrier Aircraft

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the withdrawal of Sea Harrier fighters over the next five years. [144673]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 February 2002, *Official Report*, column 1453W to the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Dr. Palmer).

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on *(a)* the availability and *(b)* the value for money of spare parts for RAF GR7 and GR9 Harriers compared with Sea Harriers. [144674]

Mr. Ingram: The availability and value for money of spares for the Harrier GR7/9 are comparable to those of the Sea Harrier. The current availability of spares fully meets our requirements.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on *(a)* repair and *(b)* upgrading of RAF Sea Harrier fighters within the last 18 months. [144680]

Mr. Ingram: The maintenance and repair of the Sea Harrier is undertaken at a variety of locations: operating units (first and second line); the Defence Aviation Repair Agency (third line); and a number of aerospace companies in the United Kingdom (fourth line). Maintenance work falls into a number of categories, some is preventative or routine, other work is based around fault diagnosis and rectification. The wide range of information is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

No Sea Harrier upgrade programme has been undertaken in the last 18 months and there are no plans for one in the future.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much he estimates it would cost to adapt the planned RAF GR7 and GR9 Harriers to accommodate *(a)* air-to-air radar and *(b)* the beyond visual range advanced medium range missile system. [144681]

Mr. Ingram: There are no plans to further enhance the air defence capability of the RAF's Harrier GR7/9 fleet. However, it is estimated that the cost of fitting air to air radar and the beyond visual range advanced medium missile system to these aircraft would be in excess of £600 million.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to provide RAF GR7 and GR9 Harriers with further air defence capabilities in addition to the provision of Sidewinder missiles. [144682]

Mr. Ingram: When the Harrier GR7 fleet is upgraded to GR9 standard it will be optimised for the offensive support role rather than air defence. Harriers will continue to carry the very capable Sidewinder AIM 9-L missile, but we currently have no further plans to enhance the air defence capabilities of the GR7 or GR9 Harriers.

HMS Echo/HMS Enterprise

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on why *(a)* HMS Echo and *(b)* HMS Enterprise are not in service; for how long they will be laid up; and what the annual cost of their (i) repairs and (ii) crew is. [143367]

Mr. Ingram: HMS Echo was accepted into service on 17 October 2003. HMS Enterprise was accepted from the prime contractor, Vosper Thornycroft in September 2003 and is expected to enter service in the third quarter of 2004. Both vessels' in-service dates have been delayed by design and production difficulties at the shipbuilder and subsequent technical difficulties. Neither vessel is laid up; however, HMS Enterprise's trials programme is currently on hold because of technical problems with her propulsion system. She is expected to resume her trials programme in April next year and in the meantime her crew are using the time to undertake training and vessel familiarisation.

These ships are maintained under novel contractor logistic support arrangements, the annual costs of which are commercially sensitive and I am withholding them in accordance with Exemption 7 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, which relates to effective management and operations of the public service.

The annual crew costs for both vessels is approximately £3.8 million, excluding seagoing allowances and training costs.

Iraq

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many road traffic *(a)* accidents and *(b)* deaths involving UK services personnel there have been in Iraq in each month since March; and how many military vehicles have been (i) written off and (ii) damaged in road accidents in Iraq since March. [R] [141059]

Mr. Ingram: The following table provides the information requested.

Month	*Total RTAs involving UK forces in Iraq*	*Total UK military fatalities as a result of an RTA in Iraq*	*Total vehicles beyond economic repair after being involved in RTAs in Iraq*
March	81	0	3
April	77	0	2
May	57	1	1
June	65	0	2
July	101	0	0
August	75	0	3
September	53	0	3
October	54	0	0
November	23	1	0

The number of vehicles that have been damaged in Road Traffic Accidents, but are not beyond economic repair, is not held centrally and would be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many claims for compensation have been submitted by Iraqis in connection with fatalities allegedly involving British Forces since 1 May. [141688]

Mr. Ingram: Iraqis have submitted 23 claims for compensation in connection with alleged fatalities involving United Kingdom Forces since the 1 May 2003. Of these, seven have been repudiated, 13 are still under investigation, and three have received compensation payment.

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much compensation has been paid by UK authorities in *(a)* Basra and *(b)* all of Iraq for injuries caused by UK forces; and if he will make a statement. [142177]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* Of the 73 claims submitted for compensation by Iraqi civilians claiming to have been injured by United Kingdom Forces since 1 May 2003, 15 have been rejected, 39 are still under investigation and 19 have received payment. Of the 19 successful claims, seven were paid to people in Basra (total £2,000) and 12 were paid in the rest of Iraq (total £4,625).

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give an update on United Kingdom operations in Iraq as part of Operation Telic. [143728]

Mr. Ingram: United Kingdom Forces continue to mount security operations in Iraq. Recent operations against smuggling, for example, have been a considerable success and were widely welcomed by the Iraqi people. Our forces are also closely engaged in developing Iraq's own security capabilities so that Iraqis can take greater responsibility for their own security. Already more than 10,500 Iraqi police are on patrol in the Multinational Division (South East), and more are being trained; other Iraqi security personnel are guarding vital infrastructure, facilities and coastline.

I refer my right hon. Friend to the statement to the House of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1302, for the most recent announcement on troop deployments.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of deployment of *(a)* armoured Land Rovers, *(b)* Puma helicopters and *(c)* Gazelle helicopters to Iraq in relation to the number of British troops in the area. [144686]

Mr. Ingram: United Kingdom forces in Iraq currently operate 208 armoured Land Rovers. The helicopter fleet includes six Gazelles and six Pumas.

We keep equipment and force levels under constant review, but there are no immediate plans to significantly alter the Land Rover or helicopter fleets.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the UK *(a)* naval and *(b)* air components deployed in the Gulf. [143732]

Mr. Ingram: There are two Royal Navy frigates deployed to the Gulf, currently HMS St. Albans and HMS Norfolk, and a supporting Royal Fleet Auxiliary, currently RFA Bayleaf.

The air assets deployed to the region are six Tornado GR4s, two VC10s, two Hercules C130Js, one HS125 and three Nimrod aircraft.

Kosovo

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the security situation in Kosovo. [143440]

Mr. Ingram: The overall security situation in Kosovo is stable. Within the secure environment provided by KFOR, the International Community continues to develop the capacity of the Kosovans to provide their own security, including through the Kosovo Police Service.

Legislation

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary legislation sponsored by his Department in 2002–03 was introduced to implement EU requirements. [141136]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence did not sponsor any primary legislation during the 2002–03 session.

In the case of secondary legislation the Department was responsible for the making of 11 general statutory instruments, none of which was introduced to implement EU requirements.

Military Personnel (Psychiatric Treatment)

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list private mental health establishments used by his Department for treatment of military personnel in each of the last six years; and what the cost was in each year. [144152]

Mr. Caplin: The private mental health establishments that have been used by the Ministry of Defence for treatment of military personnel, referred from secondary care, in each of the last six years were:

Harrogate Clinic (Cygnet); Newcastle Nuffield; Lindisfarne; The Priory Altrincham; Middleton St. George; Cheadle Royal; Marchwood Priory Southampton; The Retreat (York); Priory Hospital (Chelmsford); Foxleigh Grove (Maidenhead); Tree's Park; The Priory Glasgow; The Priory Ticehurst and The Priory Bristol.

The total costs in each year are detailed in the table. The costs shown are actual outturn prices.

Financial year	*Total cost £*
1998–99	114,000
1999–2000	173,000
2000–01	261,000
2001–02	176,328
2002–03	91,441
2003–04[1]	155,234

[1] Cost up to and including November 2003

Some additional referrals have been made from Service primary care centres across the United Kingdom. This information is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Queen's Lancashire Regiment

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on *(a)* recruitment in the Queen's Lancashire Regiment and *(b)* the future of the Regiment. [144796]

Mr. Caplin: Recruitment in the Queen's Lancashire Regiment (QLR) remains steady and current enlistment shows an improvement on that achieved at this point last year.

There are currently no plans regarding the future of the QLR. The Defence White Paper provides the policy context for shaping the structure of our armed forces. Subsequently, the details of individual systems and units within that structure will need to be developed, but presently no decisions have been taken.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment were deployed in Iraq. [144798]

Mr. Ingram: Some 484 members of The Queen's Lancashire Regiment have been, or are, currently deployed in Iraq. Of these, 64 are Territorial Army personnel.

Saudi Arabia

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many claims for payment for visa support and visa-related services by the Saudi Government have been endorsed since 1 January 1997 by staff of his Department's Director General of the Saudi Armed Forces project regarding the Al-Yamamah programme; and what the value has been of claims for visa support and visa-related services since then. [141987]

Mr. Ingram: None.

Seawolf

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Seawolf Mid-life Update programme; and what slippage there has been in the project. [144132]

Mr. Ingram: The Seawolf Mid-Life Update will improve the performance of this short range air defence system which is fitted to the Royal Navy's frigates, and will maintain its effectiveness well into this century. Against an original forecast In-Service Date (ISD) of late 2004, slippage of 13 months was reported in the 2001 Major Project Report. Following incorporation of an associated programme into the project to realise efficiency benefits through the harmonisation of work packages, the programme to ISD will be reviewed early in 2004. While slippage to ISD will delay the first ship fit, compression of the ship fitting programme will enable earlier delivery of the total capability across the frigate fleet.

Service Pensions

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the formula to be applied to compensation payable to ex-servicemen wrongly taxed on their service attributable pension will provide a return on the income wrongly deducted which is at least equivalent to the return which would have been

obtainable had the individual lent the equivalent sum to the Government under the National Savings scheme and received an element of damages; and whether the sum payable will be based on interest compounded *(a)* annually and *(b)* semi-annually. [145140]

Mr. Caplin: The formula for determining the gross compensation to ex-servicemen whose invaliding pensions were wrongly taxed for more than six years, involves uprating the sum owed by the Retail Prices Index plus 2 per cent. per annum. The sum payable is to be based on compounding annually. Over the last 20 years this provides a slightly lower return on average than applying the National Savings rate (based on a deposit of £10,000). However, in the preceding decade the Ministry of Defence's formula gives the higher return. Over the whole 30 years, the return using MOD's formula is slightly more generous than one linked to the National Savings rate.

Staffordshire Regiment

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Staffordshire Regiment following the publication of the Defence White Paper on 11 December. [144392]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 17 December 2003]*: There are currently no plans regarding the future of the Staffordshire Regiment. The Defence White Paper provides the policy context for shaping the structure of our armed forces. Subsequently, the details of individual systems and units within that structure will need to be developed, but presently no decisions have been taken.

Subcontractors

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on his policy with regard to bringing the delivery, cost and quality records of potential subcontractors to the notice of a defence prime contractor; [143368]

(2) in what circumstances he would direct the attention of a defence prime contractor to the delivery, cost and quality records of a potential subcontractor. [143448]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence and its suppliers operate within the terms of the Codes of Best Practice to promote better working relationships in defence acquisition.

It is principally the responsibility of the Department's prime contractors to select and manage the performance of their subcontractors. Many prime contractors deploy their own schemes for tracking supplier performance.

It is not general policy to disclose details of an individual supplier's performance to other suppliers because such information would be commercially confidential. Only in exceptional cases involving, for example, national security or safety issues, would potential subcontract sourcing be considered as part of the Invitation to Tender for the prime contract.

Territorial Army

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of members of the Territorial Army have been paid on time in each of the last 12 months. [144683]

Mr. Caplin: Although a percentage figure is not held, the vast majority of Territorial Army personnel have been paid on time during the last 12 months. We are aware, however, that a small number of personnel mobilised during the early stages of recent operations in Iraq did experience delays in receiving the correct pay and allowances.

Type 45 Destroyer

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to alter the planned number of Type 45 destroyers to be purchased over the next decade. [144688]

Mr. Ingram: There are six Type 45 Destroyers currently on order. Construction on the first has already begun at BAE Systems' yards on the Clyde and at the new Vosper Group facility at Portsmouth. Decisions about further orders of Type 45 Destroyers are not anticipated until the middle of this decade.

Monday 5 January 2004

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Angola

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development with specific reference to Angola, what the indicators are that define a good poverty reduction strategy paper; and what the criteria are by which the Government will measure governance and transparency credentials. [146161]

Hilary Benn: The indicators for a good poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) are those defined by the Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) Guidelines of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The JSA guidelines reflect the main principles underlying the PRSP approach. The PRSP should be prepared by the Government, including broad participation that promotes country ownership of the strategy and its implementation as well as partnerships among the government, domestic stakeholders and development partners. The JSA guidelines also reflect the expectation that, although the specific content of PRSPs will vary widely among countries, a PRSP will include four core elements: a description of the country's participatory process; poverty diagnosis; targets, indicators, and monitoring systems; and priorities for public action. Good governance measures, including those which address transparency and corruption fall under the public action section.

The UK has been working closely with the Government of Angola to ensure that the PRSP adheres to all of the JSA guidelines. The donor community in Angola fully expects the next draft version of the paper, likely to be published early in the new year, to include a strategy for good governance. Key components of that strategy will be greater transparency on Government income and expenditure as well as plans to eradicate corruption from all levels of government. The UK will continue to work closely with the World Bank and other donors to ensure that the text and implementation of the Angola PRSP meets the high standards demanded by the JSA guidelines.

Colombia

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what aid his Department is providing to Colombia, with particular reference to aid to *(a)* help the development of civil society, *(b)* improve human rights and *(c)* encourage the activity of free trades unions. [144923]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: DFID provides assistance to Colombia through the Civil Society Challenge Fund. 'War on Want' has received a £213,948 grant over four years for a 'Promotion of Workers and Human Rights' project in South West Colombia, which aims to increase trade union and social organisations' capacity to defend human and workers' rights. UNISON has received a £25,000 grant over three years to work with activists within civil society organisations and trade unions across Latin America to improve their capacity for dialogue with international global institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Labour Organisation.

DFID also contributes to the EC's Euro 105 million Country Programme for Colombia (2001–06), which contains four elements—two of which directly support efforts to improve human rights (support to administrative and judicial reform and promotion of human rights). DFID funds a £140,000 Small Grants Scheme in Colombia, which is managed by the embassy and supports projects with civil society groups.

Disabled Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144976]

Hilary Benn: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics website at http:/www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

As there are less than five members of the senior civil service in DFID with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Emergency Food Aid

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what action is being taken to respond to emergency food needs in *(a)* southern Mozambique and *(b)* Lesotho. [146156]

Hilary Benn: DFID is currently helping over 600,000 people in drought affected areas in southern Mozambique, working in co-ordination with other donors. DFID has recently provided an additional £2.3 million for WFP's operation, which includes a contribution to further vulnerability assessments. In addition, a further £350,000 has been given to support UNICEF's emergency response and vulnerability reduction programme. This programme includes nutritional and epidemiological surveillance, supplementary feeding, and nutrition support for people living with HIV/AIDS. While a good harvest is predicted for April 2004, we shall continue to monitor the situation closely.

In Lesotho, DFID is working closely with the WFP and has already provided £3 million to support feeding programmes and to assist agricultural recovery. However prospects for the 2004 harvest remain grim, with the poorest seasonal rains since records began in 1915. It is evident that food shortages will continue and that vulnerable groups will require on-going assistance. We have earmarked funds to respond to a new emergency appeal which is being prepared.

Eritrea

Mr. Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on assistance being provided in Eritrea. [145435]

Hilary Benn: I refer my hon. Friend for Glasgow, Govan to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 829W.

EU Aid (Fraud)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the subject of fraud in EU aid programmes. [144675]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: The progress of the on-going reforms aimed at improving EC financial accountability was reviewed by the Secretary of State and the representatives of other member states in the discussion of the annual report for 2002 at the November General External Affairs Council. The investigation by the Commission's Internal Audit Service into all Commission directorates and agencies, including AIDCO, will report early in the new year. All accusations of fraud are taken very seriously and followed up by DFID.

Since the late 1990s, DFID has supported the reform of the EC's aid programmes and policies, in particular the establishment of the EuropeAid office, the reform of the Management Committees, the reduction in the backlog of unspent Commission funds and the reform of the financial management of the Commission's external assistance. These measures should improve the transparency and accountability standards of the EC aid programme financial management through better scrutiny, a key and integral feature of the overall reform process.

European Constitution

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with representatives of non-governmental organisations about the proposal in the Draft European Constitution to merge the roles of High Representative and External Affairs Commissioner of the European Union. [140875]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: I met with the heads of CONCORD, a Brussels-based platform for development NGOs, ActionAid and Eurostep during my visit to Brussels in early September. We discussed the outcome of the Convention debate on development and humanitarian assistance and agreed important progress had been made in these areas so far. We also agreed our main aim for the Inter-governmental Conference, which started in early October, would be to maintain these gains. I also discussed the issue of merging the role of EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the External Affairs Commissioner with non-governmental organisations.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many and what percentage of staff in his Department contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143910]

Hilary Benn: In the financial year 2002–03, 64 DFID employees were regular contributors through the Give as You Earn scheme, representing approximately 3.8 per cent. of the Department's Home Civil Service Staff. The total value of contributions was £16,190, equivalent to £1,349 a month.

The scheme is promoted on our departmental intranet with information about how to contribute and regular updates on scheme initiatives. At our invitation, a representative of the Giving Campaign recently made a presentation about the scheme to DFID Directors and other senior managers.

We know that many staff in DFID support good causes in other ways and the information provided above does not represent the full extent of the charitable activity of our employees.

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding the Government provided for HIV/AIDS programmes in *(a)* Burundi, *(b)* Democratic Republic of the Congo, *(c)* Rwanda and *(d)* Uganda in (i) 2001, (ii) 2002 and (iii) 2003; what funding will be provided in (A) 2004, (B) 2005 and (C) 2006; and what research has been commissioned on the number of people infected in each country. [146022]

Hilary Benn: Support to HIV/AIDS is being provided as follows:

Burundi: £5.1 million over a three-year period (2002 to 2005) through Action Aid for support to the National AIDS Control Programme and Population Services International (PSI) for condom social marketing. Research and monitoring is carried out nationally by the National AIDS Control Programme.

DRC: In 2002–03 a total of £375,622 through MSF for an AIDS Care project in Bukavu was spent; in 2003–04 a total of £500,000 to Population Services International (PSI) for an expanded programme of condom social marketing has been spent. Research and monitoring is carried out nationally by the National AIDS Control Programme based in Kinshasa. DFID is doubling its core contribution next year as are others. DPID recently published its Country Engagement Plan for the DRC which sets out the key aims for a post-conflict DRC. The fight against HIV/AIDS is one of those aims and we will be working with partners on this as we build up our programme.

Rwanda: £2.95 million to the National AIDS Commission over the period April 2002 to March 2005. The primary objective is to substantially enhance the effectiveness of Rwanda's response to HIV/AIDS. DFID has also committed £895,993 to PSI over the period February 2002 to February 2005 to support social marketing of condoms and £521,000 to support an HIV/AIDS unit within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology over the period April 2001 to March 2006. In addition, since 2000–01 DFID has provided £65.4 million in general budget support to the Government of Rwanda (GoR) and is planning to provide a further £84 million over the period 2003–04 to 2005–06. This provides core funding so that GoR can tackle its Poverty Reduction Strategy objectives, which include improving HIV/AIDS related health care activities.

Research on the number of people infected with HIV/AIDS was carried out in Rwanda before 1994 and looked at the historical background of HIV infection. In 1997 the Ministry of Health carried out research on the number of people infected and 11.1 per cent. were found to be HIV positive. During six months

of every year all hospitals in Rwanda are asked to carry out a survey on the number of infected pregnant women for both rural and urban areas. The GoR currently estimate that 400,000 of its population are infected with HIV/AIDS. GoR will be carrying out an HIV/AIDS demographic survey in early 2004.

Uganda: In 2000–01 a total of £1.5 million was spent on HIV/AIDS; in 2001–02 £0.9 million was spent; in 2002–03 £1.23 million was spent. A total of £0.78 million has so far been spent in 2003–04 (£1.27 million is forecast for this financial year). For 2004–05 and 2005–06 £2 million is forecast respectively for each year. In addition, since 2000–01 general budget support has been provided to the Government of Uganda. However, it is impossible to estimate how much is being spent on HIV-related and health care activities. The numbers of people infected are currently measured through a sentinel surveillance system where they are anonymously tested. A survey of 30,000 people is planned for early 2004 and will be undertaken by USAID and the Government of Uganda.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate he has made of the number of children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS in *(a)* Burundi, *(b)* Democratic Republic of the Congo, *(c)* Rwanda and *(d)* Uganda in (i) 2001, (ii) 2002 and (iii) 2003. [146050]

Hilary Benn: Accurate data of the number of children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS is limited throughout the Great Lakes region. In Burundi it is estimated to be about 30,000 a year. In DRC it is estimated to be about 800,000 a year. In Rwanda it is estimated to be about 40,000 a year. In Uganda, according to the situation analysis of orphans in Uganda November 2002, it is estimated that there are a total of 2 million orphans of which 884,000 are AIDS orphans. This information was based on 2001 data. We have no more recent data.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the HIV/AIDS situation in the countries of the Great Lakes Region in Africa. [146051]

Hilary Benn: More than two-thirds of all HIV-infected people live in Sub-Saharan Africa—some 25 million people (and over 13 million have already died as a result of AIDS). The Great Lakes region remains the most severely affected and most countries there face a serious crisis.

According to UN AIDS estimates for 1999, the cumulative total number infected and cumulative deaths for Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda are as follows:

	Cumulative total of number infected	*Cumulative deaths*
Burundi	360,000	39,000
Rwanda	400,000	40,000
Tanzania	1,300,000	140,000
Uganda	820,000	11,000

Only Uganda has achieved an apparently sustainable reduction in the rate of new infection.

In the case of DRC, according to a recent report by the UN, half of the hospital beds are occupied by people with HIV/AIDS and it will take years to measure the exact impact in the country. Efforts to combat HIV/AIDS have been hampered by nearly five years of civil war. The UN mission in-country is using the media to increase awareness as well as working through non-governmental organisations. DFID recently published its Country Engagement Plan for the DRC which sets out the key aims for a post-conflict DRC. The fight against HIV/AIDS is one of those aims and we will be working with partners on this as we build up our programme in the DRC.

Iraq

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the average wage paid to engineers from *(a)* Iraq, *(b)* the USA and *(c)* the UK who are working on reconstruction projects in Iraq is. [145280]

Hilary Benn: Insufficient information is available on rates of pay for individuals working in Iraq to be able to assess average wages for particular professions or nationalities. DFID's policy is not to make public the salaries paid to individual consultants and contractors.

It can reasonably be assumed that pay rates for engineers working in Iraq vary significantly according to the qualifications, experience and circumstances of the individual, the type of contract and the employing organisation.

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps are being taken to recruit Iraqi engineers for reconstruction programmes in Iraq. [145281]

Hilary Benn: Iraqi engineers are already involved in identifying Iraq's reconstruction needs, setting priorities and supporting implementation of projects. UN agencies and NGOs employ large numbers of Iraqi technical staff including engineers. In the south DFID funds the Recovery and Infrastructure Group (RIG), which is refurbishing key government buildings, and another project, which is rehabilitating the offices for the Governorate teams. We are also funding the Emergency Infrastructure Project, which is carrying out emergency refurbishment of power, water and fuel supply infrastructure. The consultants leading those projects employ Iraqi engineers as integral members of their teams. DFID staff have been impressed by the technical competence of the Iraqi engineers.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if his Department will work with the Coalition Provisional Authority to ensure that efforts are made in the forthcoming school year to ensure gender equality for *(a)* the number of children attending school and *(b)* the number of children taking exams in Iraq. [145604]

Hilary Benn: DFID is funding three education advisers to work with CPA South and liaise with CPA, including on gender equality. We have provided significant support in Iraq to UNICEF, who share our concerns about all Iraqi children being able to complete their schooling and who have a particular responsibility for championing gender equality. Over the coming year we also expect to make a substantial contribution to the multi-donor trust fund for Iraq, a significant proportion of which is likely to be used to support the education sector.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development when *(a)* he and *(b)* departmental officials last met Paul Bremer (i) in Iraq, (ii) in the UK and (iii) elsewhere. [145914]

Hilary Benn: DFID's Permanent Secretary and I met Paul Bremer in Iraq in September 2003.

Regular contact between the Government and Ambassador Bremer is conducted through the Prime Minister's Special Representative to Iraq, Sir Jeremy Greenstock. DFID staff in Baghdad are also in frequent contact with US officials in the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Rwanda

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what mechanisms his Department has available to it to encourage Rwanda to adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding. [145797]

Hilary Benn: The commitments made by the Government of Rwanda in the UK/Rwanda Memorandum of Understanding are drawn in large part from Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the National Programme for Strengthening Good Governance for Poverty Reduction, the international and African human rights agreements which the Government have ratified, and the regional peace and stability Agreements which the Government have signed. The Government's accountability for honouring their commitments therefore primarily rests with the Rwandan people, through Parliament and civil society organisations. We are helping the Government to meet their commitments through maintaining a constructive dialogue with key individuals and organisations, by establishing regional and national networks, for example between Governments and between Government and civil society, and by providing targeted technical assistance.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the notification process is for informing the Rwandan Government of any failure to adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding. [145798]

Hilary Benn: Should we believe that the Government of Rwanda have taken or plans to take action incompatible with their commitments within the UK/Rwanda Memorandum of Understanding, we would formally notify the Government of Rwanda of our concern, drawing their attention to the potential implications of a failure to honour their commitments, and discuss what remedial action might be taken and how the UK might support such action. Notification could be effected through a written exchange between myself and His Excellency the President of Rwanda or, on my instructions, at a local level.

The UK/Rwandan Memorandum of Understanding provides for a period of discussion between the two Governments, before any decision to change the UK's programme of assistance is made. Our aim in any re-change in our engagement will be to continue to make the greatest possible impact on poverty in Rwanda.

Southern Africa

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he is taking to ensure that the Southern Africa Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy will have sufficient resources to ensure that the lessons learned from the International Development Committee enquiry on the humanitarian crisis in southern Africa are acted upon. [146157]

Hilary Benn: The Southern Africa Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy has been developed in response to the issues raised in the International Development Select Committee's Report. We will work to strengthen vulnerability monitoring and assessment systems that can feed into the design of safety nets in the region and will explore how the role of the private sector in enhancing food security can be encouraged. We also intend to provide support for policy networks working on food security issues in Southern Africa so that a longer-term focus on regional food security can be maintained.

We are in the process of designing a programme of support along these lines. We will look for opportunities to work with national Governments and with bilateral and multilateral donors in order that DFID's resources can leverage longer-term investment in regional food security.

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps are being taken to ensure food aid in southern Africa is *(a)* only distributed where it can be demonstrated to be the best response and *(b)* allocated on the basis of national Vulnerable Assessment Committee data. [146158]

Hilary Benn: DFID is one of the major funders of Vulnerability Assessment Committees in Southern Africa. We continue to support the work of the VACs in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe in an effort to better track vulnerability trends, and to provide a more detailed assessment of humanitarian needs and the most appropriate response to them.

VAC data has already been used to help programme our response to current humanitarian needs in the region. We are providing support for food aid operations in Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique, where VACs have recommended continued food aid programming. In situations where food aid is not considered to be an appropriate response, we are providing a range of other support aimed at encouraging agricultural recovery. Seed fairs, targeted input schemes, and support for public works programmes that provide incomes for the rural poor, are examples of non-food aid relief that DFID is currently funding.

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans the Government has to *(a)* prevent the deterioration of health and education services in southern Africa as a consequence of the HIV/AIDS crisis and *(b)* support the strengthening of these services. [146159]

Hilary Benn: DFID is currently working on this issue at a number of levels. Activities in the southern Africa region include increasing information on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the social services; the promotion of

national plans that address its impact; funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation programmes; and capacity building support for health and education services. DFID is working closely with Governments, civil society, the private sector, and other donors to tackle HIV and AIDS which is the major challenge for the region.

The Government's recent "Call for Action on HIV/AIDS" promises to make HIV/AIDS a priority for the additional £320 million a year which DFID will be devoting to Africa by 2006, fulfilling the UK pledge to increase development assistance to Africa to £1 billion per annum.

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the impact of the breakdown of the world trade talks in Cancun on developing countries. [144678]

Hilary Benn: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 17 September 2003, *Official Report*, column 861.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with officials from the *(a)* EU and *(b)* UN regarding human rights in Zimbabwe. [144679]

Hilary Benn: Human rights abuses are an increasing cause for concern in Zimbabwe. There continue to be high levels of political violence and repression, particularly against trade unions and the independent media. Failed economic policies have also undermined basic social and economic rights. This is reflected in the 5.5 million people requiring food aid and the collapse of basic services.

The subject of human rights in Zimbabwe is regularly discussed by officials at meetings of the EU's Africa Working Group. In Harare, we work closely with the UN Resident Representative and EU Ambassadors to promote human rights. This has included work on humanitarian principles to ensure relief and recovery programmes are not politicised and reach those most in need.

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the criteria are for identifying recipients of food aid in Zimbabwe. [146154]

Hilary Benn: Criteria for the distribution of food aid through the World Food Programme have been set out in a recent Memorandum of Understanding between WFP and the Government of Zimbabwe. These criteria use a number of different indicators of vulnerability to ensure that food assistance is distributed on the basis of need. The households that receive highest priority include those with chronically ill adults, those headed by children or disabled people, and those without access to land or income.

In addition to these general rations distributed to households, DFID and other humanitarian partners are providing supplementary feeding through clinics and home based care programmes. Priority has been given to areas where there is limited coverage of general distributions, high rates of childhood malnutrition and poor harvests last year.

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what contingency plans are in place in the event that food needs remain unmet in *(a)* Zimbabwe and *(b)* other parts of southern Africa before the next harvest. [146155]

Hilary Benn: In Zimbabwe it is unlikely that there will be sufficient food for the 5.5 million people who are expected to need assistance during the pre-harvest season, i.e. January to April. DFID is again providing almost £20 million for emergency feeding programmes this year, but the Government of Zimbabwe's contribution to the humanitarian feeding operation is expected to be negligible. The World Food Programme has responded by reducing rations, and is now providing about 50 per cent. of daily needs. DFID is working with the World Food Programme, other UN agencies and various non-governmental organisations to ensure that the available humanitarian resources are used efficiently and prioritised to reach the most vulnerable, including households affected by AIDS.

We are monitoring closely the situation in other countries in the region. We have already provided almost £3 million for food aid programmes in Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland to cover immediate requirements until the harvest season, and are augmenting this with support for agricultural recovery activities. We are also funding the work of the Vulnerability Assessment Committees to provide more detailed information on vulnerability, and have used this data to target nutritional support operations in Mozambique and Lesotho to complement food aid deliveries in these countries.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Boundary Review

26. **Dr. Evan Harris:** To ask the hon. Member for Gosport, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what plans the Commission has to reform the process of parliamentary boundary review. [145853]

Mr. Viggers: The Commission has no such plans. Section 16 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 provides for the functions of the Boundary Commissions to be transferred to the Electoral Commission, but these provisions have not yet been implemented. Consequently, the Electoral Commission has no responsibility yet for the process of parliamentary boundary review.

Voting Procedures

27. **Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the hon. Member for Gosport, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what discussions the Committee has had with the Electoral Commission on ensuring that people unable to sign or mark proxy or postal application forms are able to vote. [145854]

Mr. Viggers: The Speaker's Committee's statutory remit does not normally require it to discuss such matters with the Electoral Commission, and no such discussions have taken place. The Commission considered this matter in its report on absent voting, published in March 2003, but having regard to the practical difficulties in preventing abuse if the law allowed severely disabled voters to be assisted outside a polling station, recommended that the law should not be changed in relation to the application procedure for proxy votes.

TRANSPORT

Air Transport

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to start the consultation on a new night noise regime at *(a)* Heathrow, *(b)* Gatwick and *(c)* Stansted. [145636]

Mr. Darling: In the first half of this year.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will define the phrase 'longer term' in the context of paragraph 11.103 of, The Future of Air Transport; [145638]

(2) pursuant to paragraph 11.103 of The Future of Air Transport what his conclusion is regarding future use of White Waltham airfield. [145639]

Mr. Darling: In paragraphs 12.15 to 12.18 of the SERAS consultation, the Department asked for views on the potential of six existing business aviation sites including Farnborough, Northolt and Southend, to accommodate future demand for business aviation. This took account of the findings from the Department's study of business aviation in the South East which was published as the part of the consultation in July 2002.

In addition to these sites, the business aviation study also considered that two predominantly general aviation airfields, White Waltham and North Weald, were well located to meet some of the demand for business aviation in the longer term, but the case for White Waltham would be largely dependent on the future provision of capacity at Luton, Farnborough, and Northolt during the 30 year period of the White Paper. Consequently, the White Paper recognised this potential but did not arrive at any conclusions about whether White Waltham should be expanded to meet demand for business aviation.

BAA

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the ownership of BAA following the publication of the Government's White Paper on aviation; and what plans he has to break up the company. [145157]

Mr. McNulty: The Government's position on the ownership of BAA is set out in its response to the Transport Committee's Report on Aviation, Cm 6047, published in parallel with the White Paper.

Birmingham Airport

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the counter proposal for a second runway produced by Birmingham International Airport is formally being considered as part of the consultation process on the future of aviation; and if he will make a statement. [142025]

Mr. McNulty: The Department considered Birmingham International Airport's proposal as a refinement of the wide-spaced parallel runway option which was included in the Midlands Consultation Document. For the reasons set out in the White Paper "The Future of Air Transport", we have decided to support it.

Child Pedestrians (Road Accidents)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the location was of each incident resulting in the death or serious injury of a child pedestrian on UK roads in 2002; what the posted speed limit was at each of these locations; and what the actual speed was at which the vehicle involved was travelling at the time of incident. [144713]

Mr. Jamieson: The total number of fatally and seriously injured child pedestrians in road accidents in Great Britain in 2002 was 2,828. Details of every such accident could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The following table shows the number of road accidents in Great Britain in 2002, where at least one child (0–15) pedestrian was either killed or seriously injured, by the speed limit and road class.

Information on actual vehicle speeds at the time of the accidents is not recorded as part of the Department's road accident data collection system.

Fatal or serious accidents

Road type	[1]*BU*	[2]*NBU*
Motorway	0	2
A	709	65
B	318	19
C	274	12
Unclassified	1,392	19
Total	2,693	117

[1] Built-up roads, roads with a speed limit of 40mph.
[2] Non built-up roads, roads with a speed limit of 70mph.

Drink Driving

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much the Department spent on advertising the Drink Drive Campaign in each year since 1997. [144830]

Mr. Darling: Campaign advertising costs for drink drive since 1997 are as follows:

	£
1997–98	1,334,000
1998–99	1,404,000
1999–2000	2,106,000
2000–01	1,700,000
2001–02	1,346,000
2002–03	1,644,000
2003–04	[1]2,150,000

[1] estimated outturn

Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he *(a)* has commissioned and *(b)* plans to commission on the reasons for the number of drink drive fatalities. [144553]

Mr. Jamieson: Estimates of drink drive deaths and injuries are produced annually and routine information is obtained from Coroners on the level of alcohol in road accident fatalities. These enable monitoring of trends.

For the purpose of developing road safety publicity we continue to gauge attitudes and behaviour in omnibus research carried out throughout the year and also in qualitative research with targeted groups on both the effectiveness of various creative strategies and on attitudes and behaviour towards drink driving.

Our road safety research programme has included many projects on alcohol related accidents. Most recent projects have examined the behaviour of High Risk Offenders and the effectiveness of Drink Drive Rehabilitation Courses. We are about to place a contract to investigate the usefulness, acceptability and impact on lifestyle of Alcohol Ignition Interlocks for drink driving offenders. We are also the main sponsor of the worlds largest conference on this subject—the 17th International Conference on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety which meets in Glasgow in August 2004.

Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the issues on which views were invited in Combating Drink Driving: Next Steps, published in February 1998; and what action has been taken with regard to each of them. [144555]

Mr. Jamieson: Each of the issues and the action taken are listed in the following table below.

Proposal	*Action taken*
1. Introducing powers to authorise breath testing without prior suspicion.	Not proceeded with. A proposal to give the police powers to carry out targeted breathtesting was included in the Road Safety Strategy. In the event, this was deemed unnecessary as the police already undertake intelligence-led enforcement against drink-driving.
2. Where Bail Act powers are used to prevent driving between an offence and a court appearance, reducing the final period of any disqualification by any period by the amount of time that the driver was banned as part of his or her bail.	Not proceeded with. This was not an issue which attracted significant comment in the public response.
3. Streamlining prosecution proceedings by conditional fixed penalty offers to drivers not to take court proceedings and by evidential roadside breath testing.	Conditional fixed penalty offers were not proceeded with. This proposal received little support in the public response. The Government agree with those who consider that the seriousness of drink-driving offences should require a court appearance. The Government are planning to introduce legislation giving the police powers to carry out evidential roadside breathtesting as soon as parliamentary time permits.
4. Reducing the drink-drive limit to 50mg/100ml	The Government have decided not to lower the legal limit.
5. In the event of a 50mg limit, whether the current 12 months' period of disqualification should be retained or lesser penalties applied to offences in the 50–80mg range.	No action taken in view of decision on 4.
6. Introducing a specially low drink-drive limit for novice drivers.	Not proceeded with. The Government consider that allowing drivers to drink more once they cease to be novices might convey the wrong message.
7. The effectiveness of drink-drive rehabilitation courses and ideas for extending or modifying the scheme or the range of offenders to be sent on courses.	A permanent drink-drive rehabilitation scheme was introduced throughout Great Britain from 1 January 2000. The Government are planning to introduce legislation enabling courts to refer offenders to driver retraining and improvement courses as soon as parliamentary time permits.
8. Promoting self-test breathalysers.	The Government expressed doubts about the value of such devices in the consultation document and, in the light of the response, sees no reason actively to promote them.

Fuel Efficiency (Road Transport)

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department will be taking to implement the EU voluntary agreement for improving average fuel efficiency for new cars. [145733]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government strongly supports the Voluntary Agreements on new car fuel efficiency between the European Commission and the automotive industry, and has put in place a number of policies to incentivise the uptake of fuel-efficient vehicles in the UK. These are set out in detail in the Powering Future Vehicles strategy, copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House and via the Department's website.

The main measures include a number of fiscal incentives to encourage the purchase of more fuel-efficient vehicles, such as the graduated Vehicle Excise Duty and company car tax regimes. We also provide Government grants to support the purchase of certain types of fuel-efficient vehicle, including petrol-electric 'hybrid' vehicles. In recent months, we have been piloting colour-coded energy efficiency labels for new cars in some showrooms, as a way of getting clearer information on fuel efficiency to consumers, and we will be supporting the European Commission as it seeks to develop an EU-wide car energy efficiency labelling scheme. As a result of these and other measures, average new car fuel efficiency in the UK has improved by almost 10 per cent. since 1995.

The Government's Energy White Paper, published in February 2003, confirmed the Government's strong support for the Voluntary Agreements, and committed us to working with the European Commission in developing further Voluntary Agreements to continue the improvement in average new car fuel-efficiency. We have written to the European Commission setting out our view that new Agreements should be reached at an early date, establishing a new time horizon such as 2015. We have suggested that new targets should be based on authoritative evidence on available technology improvements, having regard to the full range of environmental, social and economic factors.

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what incentives his Department is giving to the use of road transport fuels which produce the least greenhouse gas emissions. [145745]

Mr. Jamieson: "Powering Future Vehicles—The Government Strategy", published in July 2002, describes the action which the Government are taking to promote the shift to clean, low carbon fuels and vehicles, including low duty rates for liquefied petroleum gas, natural gas, hydrogen and biofuels, the introduction of CO_2 -based graduated VED (Vehicle Excise Duty) and company car tax, and grants towards the purchase or conversion of cleaner fuelled vehicles, including electric and hybrid vehicles. Details of these purchase grants can be found at: www.transportenergy.org.uk The First Annual Report on implementation of the Strategy was published in October. Copies of both documents are available in the Libraries of the House.

Legislation

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary legislation sponsored by his Department in 2002–03 was introduced to implement EU requirements. [141129]

Dr. Howells: No primary legislation sponsored by the Department for Transport in the 2002–03 Parliamentary session was introduced to implement EU requirements. The secondary legislation sponsored by the Department comprised both general and local instruments. The proportion of all these instruments which were introduced to implement EU requirements was approximately 1 per cent. In the case of general instruments alone the proportion was approximately 13 per cent.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions have been brought by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in each of the last 10 years; and how many of them have resulted in convictions. [145242]

Mr. Jamieson: Prior to 1995, prosecutions by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency were conducted by local offices. In 1995 the process was started to centralise these prosecutions, and by 1998 the central unit had became fully functional. Data prior to 1995 is not available.

Year	*Number of prosecutions*	*Number of convictions*
1995	1	1
1996	2	2
1997	4	4
1998	8	8
1999	10	10
2000	9	9
2001	[1]10	9
2002	[1]13	12
2003	7	7

[1] In both 2001 and 2002 the Maritime and Coastguard Agency did joint investigations with the police. The Crown Prosecution Service and not the Maritime and Coastguard Agency undertook the prosecutions which did not result in a conviction.

Marketing

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spent on marketing in each year since 1997. [144886]

Mr. Darling: Annual expenditure for the years requested are as follows:

	£ million
1997–98	18.8
1998–99	18.2
1999–2000	26.9
2000–01	32.0
2001–02	15.0
2002–03	17.6

For the latest year, 2002–03, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the expenditure relates to Think! which promotes road safety messages to adults and children and is a vital part of the Government's strategy to reduce deaths and injuries.

Until 2001 figures for expenditure cover the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, (DTLR) and the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Breaking out the transport element for the years 1997–98 to 2000–01 could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Motorways

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which bodies are responsible for the safe use of traffic cones on motorways. [145781]

Mr. Jamieson: The prime responsibility for the safe use of traffic cones on motorways lies with the highway authority and its consultants and contractors. In general, the Highways Agency, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport, is the highway authority for motorways in England.

In emergency situations, the police take responsibility for the direction of traffic on motorways, and may use traffic cones to facilitate this task.

New Airport (Thames Estuary)

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to rule out, for the foreseeable future, any further schemes for a new airport in the Thames estuary. [145163]

Mr. McNulty: On 16 December 2003, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport published a White Paper, The Future of Air Transport, which sets out policies in airport development up to 2030.

Pollution Tracking

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what use is made of satellite tracking systems in detecting pollution incidents in United Kingdom waters. [145240]

Mr. Jamieson: My Department have been involved in recent trials which made use of satellite data for detecting pollution incidents in UK waters. Overall the trials were deemed a success.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has recently let a contract with a satellite company to provide analysed images from satellites linked specifically to the identification of oil spills. This will run for two months during January and February, and will cover the English Channel and South West approaches.

A further operational programme using satellites for oil detection is scheduled for March over a period of five months. This will be a transnational project involving Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.

Public Service Obligations (Air Services)

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the compatibility of public service obligations on regional air services with European Commission regulations. [145284]

Mr. McNulty: The imposition of Public Service Obligations on regional air services is governed by EC Regulation 2408/92. All applications for the imposition of PSOs on regional air services are considered against the criteria set out in the relevant Regulations.

Railways

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investigation he has undertaken of the condition of signalling equipment on the rail line between Gloucester and Bristol; and what safety appraisal he has sought from the different rail authorities. [144908]

Mr. McNulty: The condition of the signalling equipment on the rail line between Gloucester and Bristol is an operational matter for Network Rail.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advise that they have not received any reports of any specific problems with the signalling equipment along this rail line. However, the HSE's Railway Inspectorate (HMRI) recently requested infrastructure reports about this region from Network Rail which they will be analysing.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects *(a)* rail freight facility grants and *(b)* track access grants to recommence. [145011]

Mr. McNulty: The Strategic Rail Authority hopes to re-launch its freight grant schemes when funds become available. It plans to replace track access grants with a new Company Neutral Revenue Support scheme.

Road Charging

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement further to the recent Commission for Integrated Transport Report on proposals fundamentally to review how motorists pay to use the road network. [144814]

Mr. Jamieson: On 9 July 2003, *Official Report*, columns 1175–79 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a feasibility study into road charging. The terms of reference are contained in the Department for Transport publication "Managing our Roads". The study will report to him next summer.

Road Resurfacing

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road resurfacing projects have been delayed since 2001 from their provisional or planned dates owing to value management work. [140803]

Mr. Jamieson: Value management is a structured process used by the Highways Agency to establish priorities and best value from the available budget for maintaining the strategic road network. A range of factors is taken into account in programming maintenance projects that include the latest information on surface conditions and opportunities to combine maintenance work with other projects in order to minimise disruption to traffic. The re-phasing of projects is not the result of value management work, but arises from a reappraisal of factors that influence the appropriate timing for works to be undertaken, in the light of better information.

Safety Cameras

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by (i) his Department and (ii) consultants engaged by his Department in supervision and monitoring of safety camera partnerships. [143094]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* There are five people (four exclusively) employed in the Department working on the safety camera programme which includes the supervision and monitoring of partnerships. The number of consultant staff involved in supervising or monitoring the safety camera programme varies from time to time.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statistical data safety camera partnerships are required to submit to his Department each quarter; and to what use such statistical data is put. [143096]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* Partnerships are required to provide quarterly monitoring information and data covering traffic speeds, casualties, public opinion and costs. The information is collated, analysed and presented to inform policy development. The results are published annually on the DfT website and are available in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fixed speed cameras there are on the A28 between Ashford and Margate. [142942]

Mr. Jamieson: Five. When Kent joined the scheme there were already three cameras enforcing at high-risk sites on this route. The Partnership have recently installed a further two cameras at sites where 11 people had been killed or seriously injured over the past three years.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the uses to which surplus funds from *(a)* speed and *(b)* red light cameras are put in Essex. [145164]

Mr. Jamieson: All surplus funds arising from safety camera activity within partnerships operating within the netting off programme, that is over and above the amount required to cover their costs, are passed to the Treasury. Where areas are not yet in the scheme all fine revenue from camera activity passes to the Treasury in the usual way.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the cost of running *(a)* speed and *(b)* red light cameras in Essex was in each of the last five years; and what the estimated costs are for the current financial year. [145168]

Mr. Jamieson: The cost to the Essex Safety Camera Partnership for operating their safety cameras for the most recent audited years was £1,846,480 in 2000–01 and £3,179,304 in 2001–02. Estimated costs for 2002–03 and 2003–04 are £5,150,286 and £5,980,765 respectively. Costs for speed and traffic signal cameras cannot be apportioned separately. Prior to the start of the safety camera netting off trial in April 2000 local authorities were not obliged to provide information on camera activity.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were killed in road traffic accidents on Essex roads in each of the last five years. [145169]

Mr. Jamieson: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Fatalities in accidents on roads in Essex

Year	*Number*
1998	84
1999	112
2000	86
2001	121
2002	92

Traffic Management Bill

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what salaries will be payable to traffic officers appointed under the Traffic Management Bill. [145539]

Mr. Jamieson: Traffic officers will be paid within a salary range of £15,800 to £20,000. They will receive an additional allowance of up to 20 per cent. for working a shift system. Other staff, such as supervisors and control centre personnel, who will be co-ordinating operations and fulfilling customer service functions, will be paid from aligned pay ranges.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there will be a standard national uniform for traffic officers appointed under the Traffic Management Bill; and if it will include a requirement to wear headgear. [145540]

Mr. Jamieson: A national standard uniform for traffic officers has been developed. It includes a hard hat for wearing at the scene of incidents when there is a risk of head injury.

A uniform is required to make traffic officers easily visible and recognisable, to establish authority and credibility, and to protect the public from persons impersonating a traffic officer.

Transport Council

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the outcome was of the Transport Council held in Brussels on 4 to 5 December; what the Government's stance was on the issues discussed, including its voting record; and if he will make a statement. [142977]

Mr. Jamieson: The transport session of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council met in Brussels on 5 December. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State represented the United Kingdom.

The Presidency gave a progress report on the proposed Directive on sanctions for ship-source pollution, indicating that further work was needed. The Transport Council would call on the Justice and Home Affairs Council to look at the parallel proposal for a framework decision for criminal sanctions. The UK is among Member States seeking to ensure the exclusion of criminal sanctions from the Directive.

The Council reached a General Approach on an amendment to the Regulation which established the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The Regulation extends EMSA's role into the areas of certification of third country seafarers, counter-pollution measures and ship security. The security role is to be limited, on the basis of a Presidency compromise proposal, to ships only (thereby excluding the ship/port interface and ports themselves). This was accepted by all delegations.

The Council reached a General Approach on a Regulation on transfer of vessels between Community registers. The text is acceptable to the UK.

The Council reached Political Agreement on an amending Regulation on airport slot allocation. The Presidency explained that the proposal concerned technical amendments to the existing rules on slot allocation, with market measures left to a later phase. A compromise text safeguarded the possibility of secondary slot trading at congested airports (the key issue for the UK), and removed a time limit on the re-letting of public service contracts. My right hon. Friend joined others in speaking in support of the compromise. The Commission said it would come forward in 2004 with a proposal to introduce market elements to the slot allocation system.

The Commissioner reported on her recent informal talks with the US on EU/US air service negotiations. The US had said that they envisaged the negotiations focusing on ownership and control issues, competition, leasing, and airport access.

The Council reached Political Agreement on a revised proposal to amend the guidelines to the transport Trans-European Network. This provides for: simpler environmental assessment requirements; tighter conditions for start-up aid in the context of 'motorways of the sea'; greater Commission consultation with Member States over action in response to project delays; and scope for adding to or amending the list of priority projects on the basis of two-yearly Commission reports. The amendments are largely acceptable to all Member States, including the UK.

Among AOB items, the Commission reported on progress in negotiations with the United States on interoperability of the Galileo satellite navigation system with the US Global Positioning System (GPS). The Commission also welcomed the commercial and development agreement reached with China on Galileo.

The Council reached a General Approach on the Directive on interoperability of European electronic road tolling systems. The UK has particular interest in this measure because of our plans to introduce lorry road-user charging. We were able to accept the revised text at the Council, which had moved a considerable way to accommodate concerns we had had.

There was a policy debate on the directive on charging of heavy goods vehicles (the Eurovignette directive), on the basis of three questions put in advance by the Presidency. The written submissions by Member and accession States will be used to inform future negotiations during the Irish Presidency. We explained specific points in the UK submission, in particular pressing for the scope of the Directive to permit the inclusion of congestion and environmental costs in any charges and arguing against mandatory hypothecation of toll revenue.

The Council failed to reach agreement on the Directive on weekend lorry bans. We joined a number of other Member States in speaking in support of the proposal. However, the number of Member States opposed to even minimal EU rules prevented agreement. This issue will now be examined further and put to a future Council.

The Commission presented two new legislative proposals in the area of road transport: the third driving licence directive; and a proposal requiring more frequent checking of commercial vehicles for compliance with drivers' hours legislation. These will now be examined in detail before being submitted to a future Council for agreement.

The Council agreed Conclusions on road safety, confirming the agreement reached at the informal meeting in Verona in October. The UK welcomes the Conclusions as a significant contribution to European road safety, and will support future proposals which stand up to the tests of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Commission also presented a Recommendation on enforcement in the field of road safety.

No formal votes were taken.

US Ships (Decommissioning)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what inspections *(a)* have been carried out and *(b)* are planned into the sea-worthiness of the US Navy ships moored in Hartlepool to assess their safety for returning to the United States; and if he will place copies of the completed assessments in the Library. [143762]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: Inspections of the vessels are being undertaken to ensure that they do not pose any risk while remaining in Hartlepool.

To ensure that the vessels are in a suitable condition to cross the Atlantic, a survey would be necessary before Load line Exemption Certificates can be issued.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment the Government has made of the *(a)* safety and *(b)* speed with which the US Navy ships moored in Hartlepool could be returned to the US with the use of a heavy lift vessel; and if he will place a copy of such assessments in the Library. [143764]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: Initial risk assessments and routing plans have been produced for the return voyage of the vessels, under tow. No assessment has been produced for using a heavy lift vessel.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his Answer of 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 794W, on US Ships (decommissioning), by whom an application could be made. [145193]

Mr. Jamieson: By the owner of the vessels concerned.

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his latest estimate is of how many people are driving *(a)* without a licence and *(b)* without insurance; and how many unlicensed vehicles he estimates are on the road. [145528]

Mr. Jamieson: The Department's Report, "Research into Unlicensed Driving", published on 15 December 2003, estimated that the number of people driving without a valid driving licence would lie in a range between 620,000 and just over 1 million. The Government are committed to tackling this. We are already taking action with the widespread Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras allowing police to target unlicensed vehicles on the road. All police services have 24-hour access to DVLA driving licence records via the Police National Computer.

The number of people driving without insurance is estimated at approximately 1.25 million[1]. The Department has facilitated links between the Motor Insurance Database and the Police National Computer. The database contains details of every motorist's insurance and every vehicle insured. The police are currently making up to 25,000 checks each day on this database to detect and correct uninsured driving. In addition, the Government have appointed Professor David Greenaway of the University of Nottingham to

carry out an independent review of motor insurance arrangements in the U.K, to advise on how to improve procedures and to reduce uninsured driving.

The number of unlicensed (i.e. untaxed) vehicles is estimated at 1.76 million[2]. Reforms of the vehicle registration system include:

a system of continuous registration starting in January 2004, requiring vehicle users to re-licence their vehicles on time every year, with automatic penalty notices served on those who fail to comply;

new registration documents, and tighter but simpler procedures to keep DVLA's vehicle register informed when vehicles change hands;

new powers given to local authorities to tackle abandoned cars and to bring car dumpers to book;

bar codes on tax discs and on re-licensing reminders to improve the accuracy of the vehicle register; and

an increase in DVLA's wheel clamping operations together with the introduction of a DVLA telephone hotline to target evaders.

In combination, the above measures are designed to improve the accuracy of the vehicle register from around 92 per cent. now to 97.5 per cent. by 2005 and to reduce evasion from around 4.5 per cent. to no more than 2.5 per cent. by 2007.

[1] *Source:*
Insurance industry estimate.

[2] *Source:*
"Vehicle Excise Duty Evasion 2002", published by the Office of National Statistics.

PRIME MINISTER

Asylum Law

Andrew Selous: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wokingham of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1334, what the basis was for his statement that the United Kingdom is not giving up the power to set asylum law. [145323]

The Prime Minister: EU competence over asylum and immigration does not mean we lose national control. The UK's opt-in to Title IV of the Treaty on European Union, negotiated at Amsterdam, means that we will only participate where it is in British interests. We shall continue to work with European partners—both bilaterally and within the EU—where this is good for Britain.

Chechnya

Tom Brake: To ask the Prime Minister when he last raised the issue of human rights in Chechnya with President Putin. [145800]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Blunt) on 18 June 2003, *Official Report*, column 355.

EU Policy

Mr. Spring: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the role that Roger Liddle has with respect to EU policy. [145953]

The Prime Minister: Roger Liddle is a special adviser covering European issues.

EU Reform

Keith Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made in respect of the joint letter he sent with Chancellor Schröder on the reform of the EU. [145410]

The Prime Minister: In June 2002, the European Council at Seville agreed a number of practical changes to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the Council, in line with proposals made in the Prime Minister's joint letter of 25 February 2002 with Chancellor Schröder.

Further reforms of the Council have been considered in the Convention on the Future of Europe and the subsequent Intergovernmental Conference. The Government will continue to pursue these issues as negotiations on a new EU Treaty progress.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Prime Minister how many and what percentage of staff in his office contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143898]

The Prime Minister: For these purposes, my office is part of the Cabinet Office. Currently 58 individuals, approximately 3 per cent. of staff in the Cabinet Office, contribute around £1,600 each month to charities through the Give as You Earn scheme.

The Cabinet Office regularly promotes the scheme through internal staff publications and on the Cabinet Office intranet.

Giving to charity is a personal matter. The Give as You Earn scheme is not the only method by which staff can donate to charity. For example, they may donate money through Gift Aid or volunteer their time and skills direct to charities.

Public Sector Investment

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1564, what his definition is of public sector investment; and where else in official publications his definition has been employed. [146107]

The Prime Minister: Public sector investment is defined as capital formation plus the net acquisition of land plus expenditure on capital grants. Capital formation is defined as expenditure, net of sales, on fixed assets (such as buildings, vehicles and machinery), and net stock building.

Public sector investment can be measured gross or net of depreciation. Public sector net investment and public sector gross investment are measured using data from the national accounts as defined and measured by the Office for National Statistics.

Several official publications use these definitions, including the Financial Statement and Budget report, pre-Budget report and Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses.

Romania

Keith Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what plans he has to visit Romania; [145409]

(2) when he last met the Prime Minister of Romania; and if he will make a statement. [145411]

The Prime Minister: I have no current plans to do so.

I met Prime Minister Nastase in March last year in London. I have also met him at multilateral meetings since then, including European Council.

The UK looks forward to welcoming Romania to NATO in 2004 and to the EU in 2007 and we continue to provide political and practical support to Romania in pursuit of these aims.

Saddam Hussein

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister whether former President Saddam Hussein is being held in custody as a prisoner of war under the provisions of the Geneva Convention. [145183]

The Prime Minister: Saddam Hussein is being afforded the rights of a prisoner of war under the Third Geneva Convention until such time as his status is otherwise determined by a tribunal.

Yemen

Keith Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister when he next plans to meet the President of Yemen. [145412]

The Prime Minister: I have no current plans to do so.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Performing Arts

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assistance is available to children from low income families who wish to pursue careers in the performing arts; and what the most recent figures are for regional uptake. [144744]

Mr. Miliband: Through the Music and Dance Scheme, the Department is providing significant means-tested support for over 800 exceptionally talented children aged eight and over at eight independent specialist schools in England. Around one in five families using the scheme are entitled to full remission of fees because of the level of their incomes. Figures for the regional take-up of places are not collected centrally although we are aware of regional disparities in provision. To help address those disparities we are seeking to develop the scheme, over time, by introducing non-residential complementary models to serve as focal points in regions currently poorly served.

The Dance and Drama Awards are national scholarships for students aged 16 and above and are offered on the basis of talent demonstrated at open audition. Over 60 per cent. of students with these awards have an annual family income of less than £20k.

There is a range of other assistance available, notably through the national youth music organisations such as the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, and through Arts Council England supported programmes such as the National Youth Theatre and through Creative Partnerships. Many Local Education Authority Music Services also provide assistance.

Aimhigher Programme

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans the Government has to expand the Aimhigher programme in Merseyside. [144324]

Alan Johnson: Aimhigher (formerly Excellence Challenge) operates in Excellence in Cities (EiC) areas, Education Action Zones (EAZ) and some Excellence Clusters. In April 2004 Aimhigher will merge with Partnerships for Progression, an initiative funded by HEFCE and the LSC. The new Aimhigher will be a coherent national outreach programme operating most intensively in disadvantaged areas and will cover all of Merseyside.

Child Referrals

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many referrals there have been of children up to the age of five years to social services departments in England and Wales in each year since 1997; and who initiated these referrals. [144136]

Margaret Hodge: Information on the number of referrals by age group is not collected centrally in England or Wales and nor are details of who initiated referrals. Information was collected for the first time in 2002 on the total number of referrals to social services departments of 0–17 year olds in England and the figure during the year ending 31 March 2002 was 569,400. Total figures for 2003 will be released in the publication "Referrals, Assessments and Children and Young People on Child Protection Registers, England—Year ending 31 March 2003" which is due to be published in January 2004.

Child Support

Ms Keeble: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what strategies are being developed for supporting the children of people with no recourse to public funds. [140464]

Margaret Hodge: Local authority social service departments have a range of powers and duties in relation to children and their families under the Children Act 1989.

A general duty is placed on local authorities by section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need by providing a range of services appropriate to those needs. The definition of a child in need is set out in section 17(10) of the Act, which applies to all children, regardless of whether or not their family has recourse to public funds. Services may be provided for members of the child's family under section 17 if those services help to promote the child's welfare.

There is also a duty under section 20 of the Children Act to provide accommodation for children in need.

Children At Risk Green Paper

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on how the Green Paper on children at risk will be taken forward; and what major issues attracted most comment during the consultation. [142413]

Margaret Hodge: The level of response to the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' has been exceptionally high with over 4,500 responses received of whom over 3,000 were from children and young people. But as most the responses were received in the final week and just after the consultation period it is too soon to say what major issues attracted most comment. The majority of those that have been processed are broadly in support of the aims of the Green Paper.

I propose to publish a report in February which will set out the way forward.

Children in Care

Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of children taken into care in each of the past 10 years had mothers in prison service custody at the time at which they were taken into care. [144068]

Margaret Hodge: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children under 18 there were in the care of the local authority in *(a)* St. Helens and *(b)* Merseyside in (i) 2001, (ii) 2002 and (iii) 2003. [145150]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is shown as follows for the years 2001 and 2002. Local and regional figures for looked after children for 2003 are due to be published in March 2004.

Number of children looked after at 31 March 2001 and 31 March 2002

	2001	*2002*
St. Helens	270	260
Merseyside	2,425	2,405

Source:
SSDA903 survey

Children in Prisons

Mr. Dawson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what advice he has issued to social services departments following the recent judgement that the Children Act 1989 applies to children in prisons. [144023]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 16 December 2003]:* The duties of Councils with Social Services Responsibilities towards children, including those in prisons, are set out in the Children Act 1989 and its associated regulations and guidance.

A revised Prison Service Order 4950 Regimes for Prisoners Under 18 Years Old will be issued early in the New Year in two stages; the first by February 2004 and a further more thorough version subsequently, following a recent review of safeguarding procedures in prison services, on which work is still taking place.

The booklet What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused, published in May2003, applies to all children and young people irrespective of whether they are living at home with their families and carers or away from home.

Education (North-west)

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children are benefiting from the Sure Start programme in *(a)* St. Helens South, *(b)* St. Helens, *(c)* Merseyside and *(d)* the North West Region. [141474]

Margaret Hodge: The approximate numbers of children aged under 4 who live in areas covered by Sure Start local programmes, are as follows:

(a) 2,100 are eligible for services covered by the three Sure Start local programmes in St. Helens South constituency;

(b) 3,300 are eligible in the St. Helens local authority area;

(c) 20,000 are eligible in Merseyside (including Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens and the Wirral local authority areas); and

(d) 76,000 are eligible in the North West Region.

Further Education

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many qualified further education lecturers were working in further education colleges in England on the last date for which figures are available. [144286]

Alan Johnson: The numbers of staff teaching in FE colleges in England in 2001/02 and holding a teaching qualification are shown in the following table.

	Fully qualified	*Part-qualified*	*Total*
Full-time staff	22,400	5,500	27,800
Part-time staff	18,200	13,700	31,800
Total	40,500	19,100	59,700

Source:
LSC Staff Individualised Record, 2001/02.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in what circumstances further education staff members can be *(a)* removed from post and *(b)* redeployed because they do not hold specific qualifications. [144793]

Alan Johnson: Following the enactment of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, Further Education colleges were established as independent corporations. As such, colleges are responsible for setting the pay and conditions of service of their staff.

The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2001(http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2001/20011209.htm) provide, as of September 2001, that new FE teachers must gain a

teaching qualification appropriate to their role within a time limit. This requirement does not apply, however, to those who have previously worked either as an FE teacher, a teacher in a maintained school or an equivalent elsewhere in the UK or EEA. Where a teacher fails to obtain such a qualification it is for the employing corporation to decide what action it should take to meet its legal obligations within the regulations, it is for the employing college to decide what action it should take.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which further education staff have to hold a qualification in mathematics as a prerequisite for holding their positions. [144794]

Alan Johnson: Under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 the recruitment of all staff, including those teaching mathematics, is the responsibility of individual FE colleges. Colleges need to ensure all staff have appropriate skills to meet the needs of learners. In order to support the Skills for Life agenda, the Department's policy is that from September 2002, new teachers and subject support staff who wish to specialise in teaching adult numeracy obtain, within specified timescales, an approved specialist numeracy qualification in addition to their generic initial teacher training.

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what changes there have been to the regulatory framework for further education in the past five years that require staff to meet specific qualification levels to entitle them to continue to hold their positions. [144795]

Alan Johnson: The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2001 (http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2001/20011209.htm) provide, as of September 2001, that new FE teachers must gain a teaching qualification appropriate to their role within a time limit. This requirement does not apply, however, to those who have previously worked either as an FE teacher, a teacher in a maintained school or an equivalent elsewhere in the UK or EEA. Where a teacher fails to obtain such a qualification it is for the employing corporation to decide what action it should take to meet its legal obligations within the regulations, it is for the employing college to decide what action it should take.

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds in Stoke-on-Trent who started further education courses in each year since 1997 completed their course. [143249]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) calculate and publish retention (completion) rates by the year the qualification was expected to end as opposed to the year it was started. The proportions of qualifications completed at further education colleges in Stoke-on-Trent by 16–18 year olds in the three years to 2001/02 are shown in the following table.

Retention rates in LSC funded provision for 16–18 year olds studying at FE colleges in Stoke-on-Trent by college and expected end year

Percentage

College	*Expected end year*		
	1999/2000	*2000/01*	*2001/02*
Stoke-on-Trent College	73	78	75
City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College	74	82	93

Source:
Individualised Student Record

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list initiatives launched by his Department in each of the past three years which required *(a)* higher education institutions, *(b)* further education institutions and *(c)* schools to make a formal response to his Department. [144279]

Alan Johnson: A list of the initiatives my Department has consulted on in the past three years can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/. Consultation on initiatives launched by the Department adheres to the guidance in the Cabinet Office code of practice on written consultation. There is no requirement for higher education institutions, further education institutions or schools to formally respond to initiatives the Department consults on.

Identity Cards

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the implications of the introduction of compulsory identity cards for his Department. [143354]

Mr. Charles Clarke: The Home Office has lead responsibility for developing the national identity cards scheme, which was announced by the Home Secretary on 11 November. I welcome the incremental introduction of a secure form of identification as offering the opportunity to develop and realise a number of potential benefits for learners, funding bodies and providers. The introduction of the scheme is a long-term undertaking and my officials will continue to work closely with the Home Office during the next phase of development.

List 99

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in how many cases in the last five years schools have turned down a job applicant following checks against List 99. [144965]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* My Department does not hold this information.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what duties are placed on social services departments to pass relevant details to the Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills for additions to List 99. [144966]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Under the Protection of Children Act (POCA) 1999, all regulated child care organisations have a statutory duty to refer names for possible inclusion on the POCA list

of those individuals considered unsuitable to work with children. POCA amended the Education Reform Act 1988 to provide that anyone included on the POCA list (other than provisionally) should also be included on List 99.

Mr. Osten: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether it is compulsory for schools to check List 99 before employing an individual; and what safeguards are in place to ensure that schools do so. [144967]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Employers in the education service are required to check List 99 before employing a person to work with children. My Department has issued guidance to the education service about List 99 and other pre-employment checks and I have no reason to believe that employers are not complying with this.

Literacy and Numeracy Hours

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the findings in the Ofsted report on National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy on the quality of teaching in the daily literacy and numeracy hours. [144375]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: We welcome this year's Ofsted report on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies which found that they continue to have a considerable positive impact on primary schools. Teachers have broadened their approaches to teaching across the curriculum, but we recognise too the significant issues identified by Ofsted that schools need to address, including unsatisfactory teaching and teachers' weak subject knowledge. Through the strategy set out in "Excellence and Enjoyment" we have a comprehensive agenda for schools and local education authorities to address the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. By having a greater focus on teaching and learning we will help schools build their capacity to embed the literacy and numeracy strategies across a rich and broad curriculum.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list for each local education authority the aggregated amount of money carried forward in its schools devolved budgets at April. [143016]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is not yet available. The Department is awaiting section 52 outturn statements for 2002–03 from six LEAs. Once the data is available I will write to my hon. Friend.

Maintenance Loan

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column. 666W, on higher education, at what level of parental income students will no longer be eligible for the full maintenance loan; and at what level of parental income students will be eligible for no more than 75 per cent. of the maintenance loan. [145131]

Alan Johnson: For English and Welsh students attending institutions in the UK in academic year 2004/05, the required information is set out in the following table:

(£000)

Support covered	*Full year Household residual income*	*Final year Household residual income*
Entitlement to 100 per cent. loan	31,973	31,973
Entitlement to 75 per cent. of the loan at:		
London rate	43,943	42,375
Elsewhere rate	41,710	40,428
Parental home rate	39,668	38,670

Non-resident Parents

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) whether it is his policy to establish a legal presumption of contact with children for non-resident parents; [141186]

(2) whether he plans to bring forward proposals to change the law to establish a legal presumption of contact with children for non-resident parents. [141187]

Margaret Hodge: The fundamental principle of the Children Act 1989 is that any court decision must be based on what is best for the child. There is no automatic "right" to contact for either fathers or mothers, but in practice the courts have taken the view that in most cases the child's welfare is best served by contact with both parents. This was stated by the Court of Appeal in Re: O (Contact: Imposition of Conditions) [1995] 2 FLR 124 in the following terms:

> "Where parents of a child are separated and the child is in the day-to-day care of one of them, it is almost always in the interests of the child that he or she should have contact with the other parent."

This judgment means that inherent in the courts' interpretation of the Children Act 1989, is a belief that there would normally be contact between children and both their parents.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 contains a provision that clarifies the definition of harm set out in the Children Act 1989. This makes clear that harm includes any harm a child may suffer or is at risk of suffering as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 received Royal Assent on 7 November 2002. When implemented, this new definition will apply to family proceedings relating to contact and residence applications.

There are currently no plans to establish a legal presumption of contact between children and their non-resident parents. The interest of the child should be the basis for any decision. However, the Government support the view that, in general, children benefit from a continuing relationship with both parents following parental separation, where it is in the best interests of the child and safe for all family members.

A recent study suggested that it was rare for courts to refuse a father all contact with his children and that of finalised contact cases initiated by fathers, only

10 per cent. resulted in an order for indirect contact. A copy of this research report has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Source:

'Residence and Contact Disputes in Court, Volume V by Carol Smart, Vanessa May, Amanda Wade and Claire Furniss (September 2003: Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood, University of Leeds).

Non-vocational Community Education

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what instructions he has given to *(a)* Learning and Skills Councils and *(b)* local education authorities regarding the provision of non-vocational community education; and if he will make a statement. [144626]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: As set out in the Skills Strategy White Paper, "21st Century Skills Realising our Potential", in each local area the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for securing a full range of lifelong learning opportunities for adults suitable to meet local needs. Adult and Community Learning programmes will be seen as an integral part of the wider learning opportunities for the areas.

To safeguard the availability of these types of learning, the Government and the LSC have agreed an overall indicative budget to support non-qualification bearing programmes. That budget covers, for example, family learning, learning for older people, active citizenship, community development, and learning through cultural activities.

From within that national budget, the LSC will agree with local LSCs a minimum figure to spend on such learning activities. Each local LSC will now decide with its local partners-including local education authorities, colleges, community and voluntary groups-the priorities for spending those funds in order to maximise the civic, social and cultural gain for the area.

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list the resources allocated by central Government to non-vocational community education in the years 1997–98 to 2003–04. [144627]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I have set out in the following tables figures for expenditure as set by central Government for (i) adult and community learning run through local education authorities; (ii) learndirect; and (iii) Skills for Life. Together these equate most closely to non-vocational community education.

Adult and community learning

Date	*Funding (£ million)* [1]
2000–01	145
2001–02	153
2002–03	183
2003–04	206

[1] Annual budget, by financial year, on adult and community learning run through local education authorities (recurrent figures). The figures for 2002–03 and 2003–04 include the budgets for neighbourhood learning and family learning, starting from a nil base in 2001–02. Prior to 2000–01, national figures are not available for adult and community learning as responsibility adult and community learning rested with local education authorities.

learndirect

Date (academic year)	*Funding (£ million)* [1]
1999/2000	5 (pilot)
2000/01	49
2001/02	134
2002/03	171
2003/04	178

[1] Figures for learndirect do not go back further than 1999/2000, as it was not in existence before that date.

Skills for Life

Date (academic year)	*Funding (£ million)* [1]
2001/02	253
2002/03	259
2003/04	290

[1] Figures do not go back before 2001/02 as the Skills for Life programme began in 2001.

Pre-school Places

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time nursery places were available in Warrington, North in each year since 1997. [143456]

Margaret Hodge: The information is not available in the form requested.

Figures on the number of free nursery education places taken up by three and four-year-olds in Warrington local education authority area are shown in the table.

The latest figures on early years provision in England were released by the Department on 27 November 2003 in the Statistical Bulletin "Provision For Children Under Five Years Of Age In England—January 2003", electronic copies of which are available from the Department's website, www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics.

We have made the commitment that by April 2004, six months ahead of our original target, all three-year-olds in England whose parents want one, will have access to a free, part-time early education place.

Number of free nursery education places[1,2] *taken up by three and four-year-old children— Warrington Local Education Authority area 1997–2003, position in January each year*

	Number of places
1997	3,200
1998	3,300
1999	3,200
2000	3,400
2001	4,300
2002	4,400
2003	4,400

[1] Part-time equivalent number of free nursery education places taken up by three and four-year-old children.

[2] A free nursery education place comprises five two-and-a-half-hour sessions of early years education per week, for thirty-three weeks of the year, usually three terms of eleven weeks.

Mr. Swire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans he has to increase the *(a)* number of sessions and *(b)* terms for the pre-school sector in Devon. [142508]

Margaret Hodge: The Code of Practice already makes clear that the 55 sessions of funded early education represents a minimum annual entitlement for four year olds, and from April 2004, for three year olds. There is also flexibility within the Code to allow providers to spread the annual entitlement over a term of up to 14 weeks.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

Mr. Swire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what additional financial resources he will provide to enable the pre-school sector to employ special needs co-ordinators for individual children. [142507]

Margaret Hodge: There is no plan to employ special needs co-ordinators for individual children. Every setting is required to have a lead person, or special educational needs co-ordinator, with responsibility for overall policy for all the children in the setting with special educational needs and for co-ordinating services for individual children.

Specialist Schools

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many local education authorities have made it a condition of supporting a school's bid for specialist status that the school does not exercise its right to select pupils by aptitude. [144847]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* No local education authorities (LEA) have informed the Department for Education and Skills that a condition of the authority's support for a school's bid for specialist status is that the school does not select pupils by aptitude. The LEA is the admission authority for many specialist schools and may decide that it would not choose to admit by aptitude.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many specialist schools have exercised their right to select pupils by aptitude. [144848]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* On the basis of the latest collated information, 40 specialist schools have chosen to select pupils by aptitude.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) if he will make a statement on the availability of speech and language therapists for those with special educational needs in Essex; [144774]

(2) what recent estimate his Department has made of the waiting time for children with special educational needs to access speech and language therapy; and through which organisations this service is provided. [144775]

Dr. Ladyman: I have been asked to reply.

Primary care trusts in partnership with strategic health authorities, local authorities, and other local stakeholders have the responsibility of improving the health of the community, securing the provision of high quality services, and integrating health and social care locally. They have the resources to commission services, and to identify the number of professional staff that they need to deliver those services. This process provides the means for addressing local needs within the health community including the provision of speech and language therapy. Information on waiting times for these services is not collected centrally.

Statementing (Portsmouth)

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children have been statemented as having special needs in the constituency of Portsmouth South in each year since 2001. [141350]

Margaret Hodge: The available information relates to the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs attending schools in the constituency of Portsmouth South, and is shown in the following table.

All schools: Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Position in January each year 2001 to 2003

Portsmouth South constituency	*Number of pupils with statements of SEN*
2001[1]	n/a
2002[2]	221
2003[2]	174

n/a = Not available.

[1] For 2001 SEN data are known to be incomplete and estimates at this level are not deemed reliable.

[2] Changes in the way stages of SEN are reported were introduced in 2002 and more widely used in 2003. It is possible that some discontinuity in the time series data has resulted from this underlying change.

Source:
Annual Schools' Census

The number of pupils who have been newly statemented is not available at parliamentary constituency level.

Top-up Fees

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 3 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 94W, on top-up fees, when he expects to publish the regulatory impact assessment. [145118]

Alan Johnson: The Regulatory Impact Assessment will be published in the new year.

Workforce Reform

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will place a copy of the paper, "Workforce Reform—Blue Skies", in the Library. [143418]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 671W.

WALES

Children's Commissioner

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list reports produced by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. [145042]

Mr. Touhig: : Since the establishment of the post of Children's Commissioner for Wales in March 2001 the Commissioner has produced three reports. The three reports published to date are:

The Annual Report 2001–2002—Published Oct 02

The Annual Report 2002–2003—Published Oct 03

Telling Concerns—Published Feb 03

I expect a further two reports will be published in late January/early February 2004 along with a third in the spring of 2004.

Disabled Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144986]

Mr. Touhig: : None. There is only one member of the Senior Civil Service in the Wales Office.

Potato Ring Rot

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the National Assembly of Wales about the discovery of potato ring rot in mid-Wales. [141163]

Mr. Touhig: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with the First Secretary and I meet the Assembly Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside to discuss a variety of issues, including the recent outbreak of potato ring rot.

The Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate and the Welsh Assembly took swift action to contain the outbreak following it's discovery, during a routine annual check. Notices were issued under the Plant Health Order, stopping all movements of potatoes from the farm and three additional farms in England that had recently taken a delivery of seed potatoes from the infected farm.

The variety sent to the English farms has tested negative for ring rot but will not be used as seed as a precautionary measure. Tests have now been completed on 1,500 tonnes of potatoes at Middlewood Farm. Two stocks associated with the variety 'Provento' have been found to be infected. The remaining 20 stocks of other varieties of seed potatoes, at the outbreak farm have been found free from potato ring rot.

It is a credit to the systems that the Welsh Assembly and UK Government have in place that the disease was identified during a routine check and that the swift action taken by all concerned successfully contained and managed the outbreak.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Asylum Appeals

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many asylum appeal cases remitted back to the Immigration Appellate Authority by the Immigration Appeals Tribunal were *(a)* reconsidered by an adjudicator and *(b)* withdrawn by (i) the Home Office and (ii) the applicant in the last year for which figures are available; and of those asylum appeal cases remitted and reconsidered by the Immigration Appellate Authority; how many were (A) successful and (B) unsuccessful. [145065]

Mr. Lammy: For the period 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003 there were 3,339 asylum appeals remitted from the Immigration Appeal Tribunal to the Immigration Appellate Authority Adjudicators of which a total of *(a)* 2,466 remitted asylum appeals have been promulgated by adjudicators. *(b)* (i) Appeals before the Immigration Appellate Authority are appeals against a Home Office decision and can only be withdrawn by the Appellant pursuant to Rule 42 of The Immigration and Asylum Appeals (Procedure) Rules 2003. (ii) A total of 55 remitted asylum appeals were withdrawn by the appellant from the 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003. (A)(B) There have been 2,466 remitted asylum appeals promulgated between 1 October 2003 and 30 September 2003 for which the Immigration Appellate Authority has recorded an outcome of appeal allowed, appeal dismissed or appeal withdrawn. A total of 1,772 remitted asylum appeals were dismissed, with 639 remitted asylum appeals being allowed.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many appeals against the refusal of entry clearance from Pakistan for *(a)* spouses, *(b)* fiancés, *(c)* dependent children and *(d)* dependent elderly relatives are now awaiting consideration by the Independent Appellate Authority; what the average time taken between the IAA receiving papers and an appeal being heard was in 2003; and if he will make a statement. [145396]

Mr. Lammy: The Immigration Appellate Authority does not differentiate between different categories of immigration and non-asylum appeals and is unable to provide the information without incurring disproportionate costs; For the period from the 1 October 2002 to the 30 September 2003 the average time for an immigration and non-asylum appeal to reach a substantive hearing before an Adjudicator is 14 weeks following the receipt of the appeal papers by the Immigration Appellate Authority.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will publish the *(a)* procedures and *(b)* timetables being followed by the Government to produce the list of nominees for election by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as United Kingdom Judge on the European Court of Human Rights; and whether the list will include at least one man and one woman. [142453]

Mr. Rammell *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* The procedures adopted by the Government for the nomination of candidates for the position of UK judge at the European Court of Human Rights follow those used previously for this and other international judicial appointments. The timetable is as follows:

11–16 November 2003: advertisement of position in national press

28 November 2003: closing date for written applications

December 2003: panel meets to select candidates for interview

January 2004: panel interviews potential candidates and recommends three nomination list

By 30 January 2004: list of three nominees to be approved by UK Ministers

30 January 2004: transmission of list to the Council of Europe

In view of the above procedure, it is not possible at this stage to comment on the composition of the list of three candidates to be nominated at the end of January.

Mr. Kevin McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many senior appointments in the administration of the European Court of Human Rights are unfilled; and for how long the vacancies have been unfilled. [142454]

Mr. Rammell *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* There is one senior appointment in the administration of the European Court of Human Rights which is unfilled. This vacancy has existed since November 2002. The UK Government hopes this position can be filled in the near future.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what steps he has taken to resolve the outstanding difficulties relating to the pensions and social security rights of judges of the European Court of Human Rights; and when he expects the matter to be concluded. [142455]

Mr. Rammell *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* The UK is currently waiting to see an actuarial review of the proposals made in relation to improving the benefits package for judges at the European Court of Human Rights. Once this has been published the Committee of Ministers will then be in a position to assess the feasibility of the schemes proposed. Publishing of the actuaries' report is expected in early 2004, with a decision on a package to be taken later in the year.

Postal Voting

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs who took the decision to ask the Electoral Commission to determine which regions should be selected for postal voting pilot schemes in the forthcoming European parliamentary elections in 2004. [145550]

Mr. Leslie: The decision to ask the Electoral Commission to recommend which regions would be suitable for piloting and the type of pilots they should hold was a collective decision, taken by the Government.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Fair Trade Products

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Solicitor-General whether it is the policy of her Department to use fair trade products, as a matter of course, in *(a)* sales on Departmental premises and *(b)* receptions and meetings involving staff and visitors. [142818]

The Solicitor-General: Neither the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers nor the Serious Fraud Office sells products. It is the policy of both Departments to support the principles of government procurement ensuring that it obtains overall value for money and complies with EU procurement rules. This is the policy applied for all products.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) encourages ethical purchasing as a key element of its procurement policy. The CPS contracted catering facility at its Headquarters in Ludgate Hill, London sells a selection of Fair Trade products which are available to staff and for meetings involving staff and visitors.

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) does not sell products of any sort on its premises. Catering for receptions and meetings involving staff and visitors is provided by local contractors. HMCPSI does not specify how contractors should obtain their supplies. The procurement policy for all goods and services is to use reliable suppliers of suitable products that offer good value for taxpayers' money. When Government policy exists in respect of specific types of goods or services then this is taken into account for contracts of material value.

The Treasury Solicitor's Department has no provision for making sales of any sort on its premises. Fair trade tea and coffee is, however, used where it is served at meetings and receptions involving staff and visitors

Guantanmo Bay

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Solicitor-General what assessment she has made of the case for bringing charges of treason against British detainees in Guantanamo Bay upon their return to the United Kingdom. [144840]

The Solicitor-General: Decisions to prosecute are made independently by the Crown Prosecution Service in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors. A prosecution will be brought if there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction and it is in the public interest to prosecute. If a decision to prosecute is made all relevant charges will be considered in deciding what charge an individual should face.

Timber

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Solicitor-General by what means the Law Officers' Department's policy for purchasing timber and timber products ensures that they are obtained from legal and sustainable sources. [141337]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not purchase timber and timber products directly. Furniture and building refurbishments are the two areas where the CPS may purchase products containing timber.

The CPS purchases furniture from framework contracts available from OGC buying solutions, whose products have been certified as being from legal and sustainable sources. For refurbishment work, the CPS engages its property managing agents to undertake a competitive tender using the National Building Specifications as part of standard specification, which includes the requirement to use certified timber.

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) is a small Department and it does not have a policy relating to procurement of timber or timber products. It does not purchase timber and purchase of timber products is limited to paper and occasional purchases of office furniture. The procurement policy for all goods and services is to use reliable suppliers of suitable products that offer good value for taxpayers' money. When Government policy exists in respect of specific types of goods or services then this is taken into account for contracts of material value.

The SFO when purchasing timber and timber products requires suppliers to provide written verification that the products are from legal and sustainable sources.

The Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers and the Treasury Solicitor's Department are not major consumers of timber or timber products but when timber is required, it is the Departments' policy to instruct contractors that it must be obtained lawfully only from sustainable sources, and to verify that this is done.

CABINET OFFICE

Hutton Inquiry

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will list meetings and discussions that *(a)* his Department and *(b)* other Government departments have held on the report by Lord Hutton into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr. David Kelly, broken down by date; and if he will list those present at each meeting. [145324]

Mr. Alexander: Lord Hutton has yet to present his report to the Government. The Prime Minister has already made clear he will be making a statement to the House on the day of publication.

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will place in the Library the official minutes for the series of running meetings on 7 and 8 July referred to during the inquiry by Lord Hutton into the death of Dr. David Kelly (ref: Hutton Inquiry Evidence, CAB/7/0009–13). [145325]

Mr. Alexander: The notes of the meetings referred to are on the website of the Hutton Inquiry listed as evidence number CAB/7/0009–13.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs supplementary to his oral answer to question No. 4, 16 December 2003:

"Given that 98.5 per cent. of the population of Gibraltar again voted in a referendum against any sharing of sovereignty with the Spanish, that the Chief Minister of Gibraltar has been re-elected with more than 50 per cent. of the vote on that platform, that Gibraltarians will be represented in the European Parliament from next year, and that the Spanish have apparently just negotiated a deal for sub-Mediterranean tunnel with the Moroccans, with whom they have territorial disputes, will the Minister tell us what progress has been achieved on the availability of the phone lines and health care that the Spanish provide for the Gibraltarians? What progress has been made on the ridiculous business involving having to fly over Spanish territory on Gibraltar flights that cannot land? Such a right would be accorded under treaty to any other member of the EU". [144039]

Mr. MacShane *[pursuant to his answer, 16 December 2003, Official Report c. 1418]:* I made an error in my answer, in the House, of 16 December to the hon. Member. The answer should have read as follows:

"The hon. Gentleman makes good and fair points. We want Spanish recognition of the 00350 number for Gibraltar, but they are not yet willing to concede that. The Government of Gibraltar had asked us to investigate the possibility of creating a wider Crown Dependencies number of 00350, but the other Crown Dependencies were not interested in that solution. We will continue negotiating with the Spanish and talking to them about the problem. They could send a positive signal to the people of Gibraltar and be helpful on the situation with the telephone lines".

Arms Trade

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of other governments about restricting international arms trading; what restrictions he plans to introduce; and if he will make a statement. [145373]

Mr. MacShane: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mike Hancock) on 23 October 2003, *Official Report*, column 654W.

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the export of arms. [145374]

Mr. MacShane: Britain has one of the strictest and most transparent arms export licensing systems in the world. All export licence applications are rigorously assessed on a case by case basis against the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria, taking account of the circumstances prevailing at the time and other announced Government policies. Our criteria clearly set out our commitment to take account of the risk that exports might be used for either internal repression or external aggression.

The British Government have been in the forefront of international efforts to strengthen the regulation of the arms trade and proliferation. We were instrumental in getting agreement for an EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, and we regularly encourage other countries to adopt stricter and more transparent arms export policies. We are active members of all the key regimes that work to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the Australia Group (which deals with chemical and biological weapons). The UK is also a member of key arms control treaties, such as the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

We remain committed to working with other states to find common ground on the issue of export controls. The UK aims to forge partnerships across regions, with states who have different perspectives and approaches to the export of arms, in an effort to secure a universal commitment to strengthening export controls, thereby making an important contribution to the global effort to combat weapons of proliferation.

Art Acquisition

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department has spent on the acquisition of works of art in each year since 1997, broken down by amounts spent on *(a)* paintings and *(b)* sculpture; what the single most expensive piece of art purchased by his Department since 1997 was; how much it cost; and what the total revenue raised by his Department through sales of its works of art has been since 1997. [142368]

Mr. Rammell: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has spent the following in acquiring works of art since 1997:

£

	Paintings	*Sculptures*	*Total*
1997–98	190,820	125,989	316,809
1998–99	15,300	—	15,300
1999–2000	67,054	85,000	152,054
2000–01	72,000	190,000	262,000
2001–02	—	—	—
2002–03	—	—	—
Total	345,174	400,989	746,163

The single most expensive piece of art purchased over this time was 'Dancing Columns', a sculpture by Tony Cragg, which cost £190,000 in the financial year 2000–01.

The Department has not sold any works of art over this period.

Brussels Summit

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the text referred to in the Declaration of the President of the EU as a negotiating acquis; and whether it is regarded by the Government as a negotiating acquis not open to further discussion. [145498]

Mr. MacShane: We have placed copies of all the documents produced by the Presidency during the IGC in the Library of the Houses. These include a compromise text tabled for the Naples Conclave on 28–29 November 2003 and a further text tabled in the week preceding the European Council. Yet another compromise text, promised for the second day of the European Council, was not in the event tabled, though the President of the European Council, Mr. Berlusconi, drew on it when summing up at the end of the meeting.

Until the negotiations are completed, all aspects are potentially open to further discussion. But the Italian Presidency went through the normal negotiating process of successive refinements and approximations of a text, in the search for consensus, and we would expect the next Presidency to want to draw upon this work.

Burundi

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what funding his Department has given to Burundi in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2002 and *(c)* 2003; [145152]

(2) what assistance has been given in the last five years for the reconstruction of Burundi, including *(a)* assisting returning displaced people and disaster victims and *(b)* disarmament, demobilisation, retraining and rehabilitation of fighters. [145156]

Mr. Mullin: Over the last five years the UK has put over £5 million into bilateral aid to Burundi, mostly in humanitarian and health interventions, including for displaced persons, and peace-building activities. In addition we have put 2 million US dollars into a Trust Fund for debt alleviation. The UK has also contributed 25 million US dollars to another Trust Fund for a regional programme of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in the region, of which Burundi will be a beneficiary.

We also disbursed £25,000 in 2002–03 to support mediation efforts in Burundi and have so far spent £134,326 in this financial year on governance issues. We have also provided support to the African Union peacekeeping force (AU African Mission in Burundi) with a contribution of £3.7 million to the Mozambican Government to help equip their 217-strong contingent. Following a request from the AU Chairman (Konare) to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we have agreed to support AMIB further through a contribution of £2 million to the AU administered Trust Fund.

We have also funded a number of small projects in Burundi using FCO/DFID funds, for example:

£

Project	*Cost*
Small grant scheme (SGS)	
2001–02	47,921
2002–03	47,256
2003–04	[1] 75,000
FCO departmental programme budget	
2002–03	6,000
FCO human rights project fund	
2002–03	59,996

[1] Estimate of likely spend.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the leader of Burundi on preventing the supplying, training and arming of rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [145154]

Mr. Mullin: We strongly support the arms embargo introduced in UN Security Council Resolution 1493 of 28 July 2003 which calls on all states, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to take measures to prevent such support. We are supporting proposals for an arms monitoring mechanism in the DRC.

We have a regular dialogue with the Government of Burundi and continue to encourage the Government of Burundi to pursue a negotiated agreement to bring the remaining rebel group (FNL-Rwasa) into the peace process.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his assessment is of the situation in Burundi. [145155]

Mr. Mullin: Recent developments in Burundi are encouraging but there is a long way to go. The implementation of a cease-fire and inclusion of former rebels into government following agreement in Dar es Salaam in November is good news. The African Mission in Burundi (supported by the UK) is deployed and preparing for the disarmament., demobilisation and reintegration of rebel forces. The country is preparing for elections and the end of the transition in November 2004. However, many challenges remain. Poverty remains widespread and the economic situation is poor. One rebel group remains outside the peace process. The UK will continue to support efforts to bring peace, security, stability and progress to Burundi.

Central Asian Drugs Action Plan

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer of 9 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 421W, on the Central Asian Drugs Action Plan, what effect the implementation of the Central Asian Drugs Action Plan has had on the importation of heroin from Afghanistan into the UK. [144497]

Mr. Rammell: It is estimated that over 80 per cent. of Afghan heroin reaching the UK arrives via Turkey, with Pakistan and Iran being key staging posts en route. The majority of Afghan heroin trafficked via the Central Asian Republics is judged to be destined for

consumption in Russia and other countries in the region, rather than for onward transit to the European Union and United Kingdom. The trafficking of Afghan heroin via the Central Asian Republics is therefore not a significant factor in determining the amount of heroin reaching the UK.

Chechnya

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions his Department has taken to advance the cause of human rights in Chechnya. [145799]

Mr. Rammell: We continue to be concerned over the human rights situation in Chechnya and consistent reports of human rights abuses, including reports of rising numbers of abductions and disappearances. We regularly raise UK concerns on the situation in Chechnya with the Russian Government. We most recently did so following the Chechen Presidential elections, when I called for human rights to be upheld in Chechnya. The UK also supported EU statements before and after the elections which raised similar concerns.

China

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Chinese authorities about the case of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche (Aa'n Zhaxi); and if he will make a statement. [145375]

Mr. Rammell: We have raised Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche's case with the Chinese authorities on a number of occasions. I did so most recently with Assistant Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui in Beijing on 17 December 2003. He replied that Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche had had a fair and public trial and been sentenced in accordance with Chinese law. We will continue to express our concerns about this case.

Colombia

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he is holding with the Colombian Government on human rights and freedom for trade union activities. [144921]

Mr. Rammell: We have a regular dialogue with the Colombian Government as well as with non-governmental organisations and trade unions on these issues. I raised relevant concerns during my visit to Colombia in May 2003 and again when I met the Colombian Foreign Minister in New York in September 2003. These issues were given prominence in the London Declaration issued at the London Meeting on International Support for Colombia in July. A Working Group in Bogota of the governments who attended the Meeting is monitoring, and will evaluate progress on, the implementation of the London Declaration.

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make inquiries about the whereabouts of the two Colombian military officers found guilty of the murder of Manuel Capeda. [145138]

Mr. Rammell: The Colombian authorities have informed us that these officers are currently serving prison sentences for the murder of Manuel Capeda in a state prison in the city of Ibague.

Disabled Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144979]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: At September 2003, eight FCO staff in the Senior Management Structure declared themselves to have a disability. This represents 1.7 per cent. of all staff at this level.

Draft European Constitution

Andrew Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons his Department *(a)* tabled an amendment to the draft European constitution to delete sub-clauses 2*(a)* to *(g)* from Article III-167 and *(b)* ceased to have an objection to these sub-clauses. [145210]

Mr. MacShane: Article III-167 paragraph 2 of the Convention on the Future of Europe's draft Constitutional Treaty for the EU concerns the Union's common policy on asylum. The UK tabled an amendment to the Convention draft of this article because it believed that the text could be improved by focusing it more on general provisions setting out the desired purpose and outcomes of European cooperation in this area. However, in the light of discussions during the IGC, and given that any UK participation would be on the basis of the Title IV Protocol, the Government decided not to pursue these proposals, and is content with the latest draft Treaty text.

EU-Israel Association Agreement

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent meetings he has had with EU counterparts to discuss Article II of the EU-Israel Association Agreement relating to adherence to human rights. [145389]

Mr. MacShane: The EU last discussed Israel's adherence to human rights and the EU/Israel Association Agreement at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 17 November 2003, immediately prior to the EU/Israel Association Council.

The EU has serious concerns about the lack of respect shown for the human rights of both Israeli and Palestinian people in this conflict. Along with our EU partners, we have followed a policy of constructive engagement with Israel on humanitarian and human rights issues. At the EU/Israel Association Council the EU called on Israel to abstain from any punitive measures that are not in accordance with international law, including extra-judicial killings and destruction of houses.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the status is of the city of Jerusalem in the EU-Israel Association Agreement. [145390]

Mr. MacShane: The EU/Israel Association Agreement defines the scope of its coverage as the EU and the State of Israel. It does not define further what is meant by the "State of Israel".

The Government and the International Community consider that the status of Jerusalem is one of the issues to be resolved by negotiations between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority in a permanent status agreement that ends the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Pending agreement, the Government recognises de facto Israeli authority over West Jerusalem, but consider East Jerusalem to be occupied territory. We recognise no sovereignty over the city.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what controls exist on the import of products from illegal Israeli settlements to prevent their entry to the UK under preferential treatment within the EU-Israel Association Agreement. [145391]

Mr. MacShane: The European Commission published, in November 2001, a notice to importers in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities alerting EC importers to the ineligibility of products originating in the Occupied Territories for the preferences provided by the EU/Israel Association Agreement.

HM Customs and Excise are verifying the origin of certain products. Where products are found to have originated in the Occupied Territories HM Customs and Excise collect duty from the UK importers. Other EU member states' customs authorities, working with the European Commission, are taking similar action to enforce EC law.

Great Lakes

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of child soldiers in the countries of the Great Lakes region in Africa. [145153]

Mr. Mullin: The UK condemns unequivocally the use of child soldiers.

We are particularly concerned about the widespread use of child soldiers in the Great Lakes region. The UK has contributed US$25 million to the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP). The funds for this will be used in part in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to enable the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of child soldiers. We have provided an additional £750,000 directly to UNICEF to help its programme until funding under the MDRP becomes available. The UK has also provided technical assistance to the Congolese to enable them to draw up a National Programme for DDR.

In Uganda, the UK gave £450,000 to UNICEF and Save the Children last Financial Year to rehabilitate children who have escaped from their Lords Resistance Army. We have discussed with the Ugandan Government reports of under-age soldiers being recruited by the Government defence units in the North. The Government of Uganda has assured us that they are co-operating with UNICEF to identify and demobilise the recruits. Our High Commission in Kampala is monitoring the situation.

Indonesia

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made since the EU's statement at the 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in March to encourage the Indonesian Government to comply with its obligations under Security Council Resolution 1410 and allow questioning of those people indicted by the UN's Serious Crimes Unit for the atrocities in 1999; and if he will make a statement. [145353]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To date we support the work of the Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) and are disappointed that Indonesia has failed to co-operate. We will remain in close contact with the UN, East Timor and other interested countries on what is the best way to meet East Timor's need for justice.

Iraq

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials from (i) his Department and (ii) other Departments have had contact with Mr. Nadhmi Auchi since the conflict in Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [142019]

Mr. Rammell: As far as I am aware, Ministers and officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have not had contact with Mr. Nadhmi Auchi since the conflict in Iraq. I am also not aware of any contact between Government Ministers or officials other than Mr. Auchi writing to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 15 May 2003 to introduce the Anglo Arab Organisation. The Secretary of State acknowledged his letter on 29 May 2003.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Mr. Nadhmi Auchi has advised the Government on aspects of post-conflict Iraq on an *(a)* informal and *(b)* formal basis; and if he will make a statement. [142021]

Mr. Rammell: As far as I am aware, Mr. Auchi has not advised the Government on aspects of post-conflict Iraq.

Mr. Best: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the *(a)* numbers and *(b)* origins of non-Iraqi fighters opposed to coalition forces in Iraq. [144327]

Mr. Rammell: We believe foreign fighters from a range of countries are present in Iraq. Most, but not all, have probably travelled from other countries in the Gulf, the Middle East and Africa. A smaller number may have travelled from Europe. We have no precise information on the number of foreign fighters currently in Iraq. Since any estimate of the number of foreign fighters would be based on intelligence, under Exemptions 1 and 2 of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it would not be appropriate to provide further details.

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the full minutes and proceedings for meetings of the International Advisory and Monitoring Board for the Development Fund for Iraq will be published. [145119]

Mr. Rammell: The International Advisory and Monitoring Board (IAMB) held its first meeting on 5 December. According to the Terms of Reference for the Board all minutes of meetings of the IAMB will be made publicly available within 30 days of being finalised by the IAMB. The terms of reference and a press release on the meeting are available on the IMF's website at www.imf.org

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether United Kingdom representatives in Iraq had prior knowledge of the raid on the headquarters of the Iraqi Federation of Workers' Trade Unions on Saturday, 6 December. [145218]

Mr. MacShane: The UK Government have no information about an incident at the temporary headquarters of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions on 6 December 2003. In any case, the UK is not routinely consulted on US tactical operations where UK forces are not involved.

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government is taking to provide advice on the security situation in Iraq to UK civilians offered employment there. [145279]

Mr. Rammell: The Government are going to considerable lengths to mitigate and manage the security risks for the British civilians whom they are employing in Iraq. But, for obvious reasons, we do not describe publicly the measures we are taking.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer of 9 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 422W, on Iraq, what information he has collated about the reasons why families of the Iraqi Governing Council have left Iraq since the coalition invasion. [145674]

Mr. Rammell: The reasons why families of Iraqi Governing Council members come and go from Iraq are personal, and a matter for the families concerned. We have not sought to collate information on their movements.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Iraq. [146223]

Mr. Rammell: Foreign engagements for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers are kept under constant review. It is not practice to announce such visits until they are firm. Because of the unpredictable nature of world events, final decisions on overseas visits are often not possible until very shortly before the day of travel and occasionally not until they are under way.

Kashmir

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his *(a)* Indian and *(b)* Pakistani counterpart concerning the alleged police killing of two civilians near the Jehum Valley Hospital in Srinagar, Kashmir; and if he will make a statement. [145292]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I was concerned to hear of the death of two civilians during a gun battle between the security forces and militants in Srinagar on 14 December 2003. Ordinary people have had to pay a heavy price in the continued violence in Kashmir. While I have not raised this specific issue with the Indian and Pakistani Governments, we regularly urge both sides to work together to resolve their differences, including over Kashmir.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had since 4 November with representatives of the Governments of *(a)* Pakistan and *(b)* India on progress in dealing with the Kashmir situation. [145293]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: During my visit to Pakistan from 9 to 12 December 2003, I met both President Musharraf and Foreign Minister Kasuri. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met Prime Minister Vajpayee on 6 December 2003 during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Abuja. During our discussions with both Governments, we warmly welcomed the recent confidence-building measures, including the ceasefire on the Line of Control in Kashmir. We also encouraged both Governments to make sustained efforts to address each other's concerns and to pave the way for a process aimed at settling all their outstanding differences, including the issue of Kashmir. We very much hope that the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation Summit in Islamabad on 4 to 6 January 2004 will enable all the countries of South Asia to take forward their ideas for further regional co-operation.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what confidence-building programmes are *(a)* funded, *(b)* supported, *(c)* proposed and *(d)* initiated by his Department aimed at resolving the Kashmir situation; and if he will make a statement. [145294]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The British Government fully support the Governments of India and Pakistan in their efforts to improve their relations. We have warmly welcomed the recent confidence-building measures taken by both Governments, including the ceasefire along the Line of Control. Through our Global Conflict Prevention Pool, we fund a variety of activities encouraging contact between India and Pakistan and promoting public debate on reducing conflict in the region. We will continue to encourage both Governments to sustain their efforts to address each other's concerns and to pave the way for a process aimed at settling all their outstanding differences, including the issue of Kashmir.

Middle East

Mr. Best: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what influence the United Kingdom is exerting on the US Administration to urge it to make representations to the Israeli Government on the subject of the security wall. [144382]

Mr. Rammell: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Lyons) on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 797–98W.

Official Receptions

Mr. Grogan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the serving of beer at official receptions. [145777]

Mr. Rammell: At official functions organised by the Government Hospitality Section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office beer is served to guests should it be requested.

Pakistan (Immigration)

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on *(a)* the level of service for immigration cases provided by HM high commission, Islamabad and *(b)* his future plans for that service. [145395]

Mr. Mullin: As a result of the security situation in Pakistan our high commission has operated for a substantial period with severely reduced staff. This reduced our visa section in Islamabad's capacity to provide a full service. In recent months service levels have improved significantly.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is committed to restoring a full visa service in Pakistan as soon as is practical and the security situation allows. It was announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Trade and Industry on 10 December 2003 during his recent visit to Pakistan that the service has been further expanded to include business visitors, and certain categories of permit free employment; including those who wish to set up a business in the UK, sole representatives, investors and retired persons of independent means. This is further to the expansion of services which was implemented on 17 November 2003 to include applications from visitors who have travelled to the UK, Canada. Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America within the last 10 years, fiance*(e)*s applying to settle in the UK, EEA family members and others applying for family reunion. We are committed to reducing the waiting and processing times of all applications and gradually increasing service levels with a view to implementing a full service by April 2004 at a reasonable level of demand. A copy of the Minister's statement is available on the British high commission's website: www.britainonline.org.pk/british-government-statements-and-press-releases.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many appeals from Pakistan against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement by *(a)* spouses, *(b)* fiancés, *(c)* dependent children and *(d)* dependent elderly relatives are waiting to be processed by UK visas. [145400]

Mr. Mullin: Appeals against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement are processed in the UK by the Appeals Processing Centre of the Home Office. Our high commission in Islamabad currently has 575 settlement appeals awaiting despatch to the Appeals Processing Centre of the Home Office. To break down the information further as requested by the hon. Member could be provided only at disproportionate cost by deploying high commission staff to review each of the appeals individually.

Russia

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the fairness of the recent elections in Russia. [143934]

Mr. Rammell: International observers assessed the conduct of voting as positive in an overwhelming majority of polling stations and election day proceeded in a generally calm and peaceful manner.

However, we take very seriously the OSCE's preliminary conclusions that, while the Duma elections were well organised, the pre-election process failed to meet many international standards.

We look forward to seeing the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights report and hope that the Russian Federation will follow-up any recommendations before this year's presidential elections.

Strategy White Paper

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his written statement of 2 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 57–58WS on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Strategy White Paper, for what reason protection of the environment is not included in the list of international strategic priorities; and if he will make a statement. [145276]

Mr. Straw: Sustainable development is listed as one of the Government's eight international strategic priorities. Specific aims listed under this priority include reinvigorating action on climate change, and supporting the Johannesburg Summit commitments with a focus on biodiversity, water, sanitation and human settlements.

US-occupied Sites

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the sites on UK territory outside the UK occupied by the US, giving in each case the *(a)* location, *(b)* acreage and *(c)* purpose of occupation. [145148]

Mr. Rammell: Sites occupied by the United States in UK Overseas Territories are as follows:

On Ascension Island, the US Air Force uses a total of 3.600 acres of land, comprising 1,196 acres for Wideawake airfield and a further 2,404 acres mainly for buildings and communications equipment. On Diego Garcia, which is part of the British Indian Ocean Territory, the United States maintains a naval and air support facility consisting of an anchorage, airfield, support and supply elements and ancillary services, personnel accommodation and transmitting and receiving services, as well as a hydro-acoustic monitoring facility. It is not feasible to calculate the precise acreage occupied for these various purposes.

There is no US-occupied land on other UK Territories apart from 0.47 acres occupied by the US Consulate-General in Bermuda.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the administrative consequences for nationals of *(a)* the UK and *(b)* Zimbabwe consequent on that country's Government's announced withdrawal from the Commonwealth. [145085]

Mr. Mullin: The immediate impact on UK nationals of Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth is negligible. Our High Commission in Harare, which becomes an Embassy, will continue to provide consular and other services normally afforded to British citizens.

No policy or legislative changes in response to Zimbabwe's withdrawal will be made after detailed consideration of the impact such changes might have on ordinary Zimbabweans. We also intend to remain in step with our key Commonwealth partners and co-ordinate closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.

Under UK legislation, Zimbabwean citizens have the status of "Commonwealth citizens" because Zimbabwe is designated as a Commonwealth State in Schedule 3 of the 1981 British Nationality Act. This entitles them to certain rights and privileges as Commonwealth citizens, such as the right to vote in national, local and European elections held in the UK.

Zimbabweans currently benefit from the provisions of the immigration rules relating to Commonwealth citizens. They are eligible for entry to the UK under the UK Ancestry entry clearance and the Working Holidaymaker provisions of the Immigration Rules. Zimbabweans who have one British parent and are Commonwealth citizens, have right of abode in the UK.

Also affected is the right of Zimbabwean nationals to consular protection in third countries where Zimbabwe has no diplomatic representation.

Zimbabwe's withdrawal affects the eligibility of its nationals to serve in our armed forces and civil service.

There are implications for the UK's extradition arrangements with Zimbabwe, now that it has ceased to be a member of the Commonwealth.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agenda 21

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the implementation of Agenda 21 by each local authority; and if she will make a statement. [142790]

Margaret Beckett: The Government monitored progress on Local Agenda 21 (LA21) until the end of 2000. By then over 93 per cent. of local authorities in England and Wales had LA21 strategies in place. As these were voluntary strategies developed to reflect local circumstances, we did not carry out any formal assessment. Stakeholders have, however, carried out a number of studies into LA21 in the UK.

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to prepare community strategies for promoting the economic, social and environmental well being of their communities and contributing to sustainable development in the UK. The Government's statutory guidance says that authorities should build on the experience of partnership working and community engagement gained through LA21. The Government want to see sustainable development become a mainstream issue for local authorities, their partners, and local communities. We believe that the most effective way to achieve this is to subsume LA21 strategies within statutory community strategies.

Questions about community strategies should be addressed to my right hon. colleague the Minister of State for Local Government, Regional Governance and Fire.

Albatrosses and Petrels

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects the Government to ratify the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels; and if she will make a statement. [141072]

Mr. Morley: The Government are working hard to ratify the Agreement and will do so as soon as possible. With South Africa's ratification in November, the Agreement has the five range states needed to allow it to enter into force. This will happen on 1 February 2004.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which countries have so far ratified the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels. [141073]

Mr. Morley: Australia, New Zealand, Ecuador, Spain and South Africa have now ratified the Agreement.

The UK intends to do so as soon as possible.

Carcinogens

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total amount of recognised carcinogens released to the air was in *(a)* England and *(b)* each government region in each year since 1997. [143759]

Mr. Bradshaw: The National Atmospheric Emission Inventory (available on line http://www.naei.org.uk/) compiles annual air pollutant emissions for the United Kingdom. The most recent year for which emissions have been calculated is 2001. Emissions of four known or probable human carcinogens are calculated: benzene, 1,3-butadiene, benzo[a]pyrene and dioxins. Table 1 shows the national annual emissions since 1997 taken from the National Atmospheric Emission Inventory.

Emissions are generally calculated using statistics that are available on a national scale (e.g. fuel use). Inventory experts are gathering the regional information in order to undertake the complex process of calculating regional

totals. So far, emissions for England have been calculated for 1997 to 2001 (Table 2), but emissions for each Government region are not yet available.

Table 1 UK emissions 1997–2001

	Units	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Benzene	kt	35.8	31.7	28.7	15.7	15.4
1,3-Butadiene	kt	7.3	6.4	5.9	5.1	4.5
BaP	tgTE	11.2	9.7	8.6	6.7	7.2
Dioxins	Q	471	411	395	346	341

Table 2 England emissions for 1997–2001

	Units	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Benzene	Kt	27.4	24.3	22.0	12.0	11.8
1,3-Butadiene	kt	6.0	5.3	4.8	4.2	3.7
BaP	t	9.4	8.2	7.3	5.6	6.1
Dioxins	gTEQ	376	328	315	276	272

Notes:

(a) BaP = benzo[a]pyrene (a carcinogen in its own right and a marker for carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air);

(b) The term dioxin refers to a range of polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxin and polychlorinated dibenzofuran compounds. The emissions of dioxins are presented in terms of the sum of the weighted emissions expressed as gTEQs. TEQs weight the toxicity of the less toxic congeners as fractions of the toxicity of 2,3,7,8-TCDD, the most toxic congener.

Bovine TB

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the effect of the reactive cull component of the Government's randomised badger culling trials on the incidence of TB in dairy cattle. [144403]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB carried out an interim analysis of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial data collected up to the end of August 2003. The analysis indicated that there is an increased risk of TB breakdowns occurring in trial areas where reactive culling has taken place, compared to the related control (survey-only) areas. The increase is estimated at 27 per cent.

This conclusion is statistically valid and has been reached after taking into account factors other than culling (e.g. history of breakdowns in the area, number of herds, herd size etc.) which may have an impact on the number of breakdowns in a particular area. This outcome is consistent across nine of the 10 triplets; there has not been any reactive culling in the 10th reactive trial area.

On the basis of these findings, ministers have decided to suspend culling in reactive trial areas, because the evidence suggests that such culling leads to more cases of TB in cattle.

Climate Change

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the outcome of the recent climate change meeting in Milan. [145136]

Mr. Morley: The Ninth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP9) took place between 1–12 December in Milan, Italy. The Secretary of State and I represented the UK during the ministerial segment on 10–12 December. Agreement was reached on a range of important and forward looking items on the COP agenda, including the following: rules for inclusion of forestry projects (sinks) in the Clean Development Mechanism; the guidelines for operationalising two of the three funds for developing countries agreed at COP7 in Marrakech (the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund); the level of the Convention budget for the biennium 2004–05 including provision for activities to implement the Kyoto Protocol once it comes into effect; two new agenda items, building on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Third Assessment Report, examining the scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of mitigation and adaptation; and the scope of further methodological work required in the next few years to advance the work of the Convention. This means that all the key decisions have now been taken to enable implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

During the three ministerial round table discussions, many countries underlined the importance of the Kyoto Protocol and looked forward to its entry into force. The view was also widely expressed that further action to tackle climate change is urgently required. Some speakers focussed on the need for further action on the impacts of, and vulnerability and adaptation to, climate change, and on the transfer of low carbon technology to developing countries, while others argued strongly for deeper cuts in emissions from developed countries and the important role of existing and new technologies to achieve them.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the outcome of the COP9 conference of parties to the United Nations framework convention on climate change held in Milan this month; if she will place in the Library copies of all papers *(a)* submitted by the United Kingdom and *(b)* submitted by other parties which include information relevant to the United Kingdom; and if she will publish details of website addresses which give information on the conference. [144509]

Mr. Morley: The Ninth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP9) took place between 1–12 December in Milan, Italy. The Secretary of State and I represented the UK during the ministerial segment on 10–12 December. Agreement was reached on a range of important and forward looking items on the COP agenda, including the following: rules for inclusion of forestry projects (sinks) in the Clean Development Mechanism; the guidelines for operationalising two of the three funds for developing countries agreed at COP7 in Marrakech (the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund); the level of the Convention budget for the biennium 2004–05 including provision for activities to implement the Kyoto Protocol once it comes into effect; two new agenda items, building on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Third Assessment Report, examining the scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of mitigation and adaptation; and the scope of further methodological work required in the next few years to advance the work

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In the international climate change negotiations, the UK negotiates as part of the European Union. I have therefore placed copies of all EU statements, which incorporate the UK's views and reflect the EU consensus, in the Libraries of both Houses. The UNFCCC website (http://unfccc.int/) gives complete information on the Conference and copies of all papers.

Crop Areas

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the cost to farmers arising from the over-estimation of the wheat area for this year's harvest. [143590]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra figures are only one of a number of sources of information available to the market and individual buyers and sellers have to use their own commercial judgment. Although there was an initial increase of approximately £5 per tonne immediately following publication of corrected figures, this had reduced by about half within a few days with the price back on trend. This reflects the UK's position as a price taker rather than a price maker in an international commodity market. UK production is about only 13 per cent. of EU production, and EU production is just over 20 per cent. of world production. On average, however, wheat prices this year are now some £50 per tonne higher than at the same period last year. They have risen steadily throughout the marketing season in response to serious reductions in supply elsewhere in Europe as a result of heat and drought in the summer. This has also coincided with a tighter global market which has seen world wheat prices at their highest levels in recent years. There was no discernable effect on prices when the provisional agricultural census results were published in the middle of September.

Disabled Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many senior civil servants in her Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144977]

Alun Michael: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the civil service website at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

The data show that 1 per cent. of senior civil servants in the Department have a disability. As there are fewer than five members of the senior civil service in my Department with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the "Code Of Practice on access to Government Information".

Energy Production

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much energy was produced per person in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* other EU countries in 2002. [143760]

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

Data on EU and worldwide energy production are collated annually by the International Energy Agency. The latest available data for all EU countries relates to 2001, and is shown in the following table.

tonnes

Country	*Energy production per person, in tonnes of oil equivalent*
Austria	1.20
Belgium	1.27
Denmark	5.07
Finland	2.92
France	2.21
Germany	1.62
Greece	0.91
Ireland	0.45
Italy	0.45
Luxembourg	0.14
Netherlands	3.77
Portugal	0.34
Spain	0.82
Sweden	3.86
UK	4.46
Average for all EU countries	1.57

Flood Prevention

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities wishing to take part in trials of demountable flood barriers; [143167]

(2) what the specification for the Environment Agency's trials of the Pallet Barrier system are in *(a)* Shrewsbury, *(b)* Worcester and *(c)* Ironbridge Gorge; [143168]

(3) what assessment she has made of the impact of temporary demountable flood barriers upon flood prevention. [143169]

Margaret Beckett: Demountable defences have been used in numerous places and include for example gated openings and the demountable wall at Bewdley. Where tested these have all generally performed well as flood defence structures.

In addition we have funded the Environment Agency to trial movable temporary defences including the pallet barrier system. These are at Shrewsbury, Worcester and Ironbridge Gorge. The trials are designed to test the

security of the defence that might be achieved by such systems. The results of these trials will be made publicly available once they have been completed.

We will then make an assessment of the potential impact of temporary flood barriers on flood alleviation and will issue guidance to operating authorities accordingly. However it should be noted that these temporary systems are only likely to be suitable for particular locations and where there is adequate notice of rising river levels such as on the River Severn.

Nuclear Sites

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which United Kingdom nuclear sites are being considered for complementary access by safeguards inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency. [142921]

Nigel Griffiths: I have been asked to reply.

The protocol additional to the UK/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement will allow the IAEA to request complementary access to nuclear sites and other locations in the UK under the terms set out in the protocol. Although the protocol is not yet in force, we are willing to allow complementary access visits on a voluntary basis. The IAEA has not requested any such access.

Quality Council Status

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what advantages to parish councils and their communities will follow from an award of quality council status to that council. [145137]

Alun Michael: Achieving quality parish status demonstrates that a council has met certain minimum standards expected from an effective, representative and active parish council. The Council will then be in a position to do more for it's communities on behalf of the principal local authorities thus making services more responsive to local needs. The main beneficiary of Quality status will be the local community as the Council takes on an enhanced role:

As an integral part of all consultation arrangements set up by principal local authorities and other service providers on how services are delivered in its area;

In the management, delivery and discussion about the future of services which parish councils may carry out and deliver, on behalf of the principal local authority; and

In the provision of access points to information on services of principal local authorities and other service providers.

This enhanced role will be achieved through the negotiation of charters with principal local authorities. We shall be monitoring the development of these charters and the impact of the Quality Town and Parish Scheme to ensure it achieves real benefits, but at the level of anecdote there is evidence of real engagements and enthusiasm among parish Councils up and down the country. This is very encouraging.

Racing Greyhounds

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make it her policy to use the proposed Animal Welfare Bill to improve the statutory protection for the welfare of racing greyhounds. [143370]

Mr. Bradshaw: Yes.

Regional Producers (Wiltshire) Ltd.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to her answer of 16 December 2003, ref. 143598, if she will list the public objectives of Regional Producers (Wiltshire) Ltd. [145223]

Alun Michael: The organisation describes its purpose on its website as:

"Wiltshire Regional Producers Limited provide high quality produce at affordable prices with emphasis on traditional customer service. All our produce is sourced from local regional producers, be they farmers, cottage industry workers or small businesses working to the standards of ISO9002. We utilise database systems to ensure that our produce comes from fully traceable sources guaranteeing safety and peace of mind for families and businesses alike. Our existing customers testify to high standards and superior taste."

I have asked Great Western Enterprise and Business Link for Berkshire and Wiltshire to write to the hon. Member with details of the technical objectives put forward by Regional Producers (Wiltshire) Ltd. in their applications for grant support.

Small Businesses

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether her Department uses a database of individual small businesses for consultation purposes. [142480]

Alun Michael: The Department has lists that it uses to identify and consult with interested bodies and organisations as appropriate and these lists include small businesses which have expressed an interest in the particular subject. The Department also makes use of the database established by the Small Business Service (SBS) in undertaking such consultations.

The Department recognises the importance of communicating effectively and is developing a centrally controlled database. This, in addition to professional tools and guidance, will continue to enhance our communications with all of our key stakeholders.

DEFENCE

Gulf War Syndrome

Mr. Blunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of whether the epidemiological evidence available supports the existence of Gulf War Syndrome. [145404]

Mr. Caplin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 135WH, to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) during a debate about Gulf veterans.

Iraq

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the composition of United Kingdom land forces in Iraq. [143727]

Mr. Ingram: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 20 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 1253W, to the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Soames). In addition, the 1st Battalion, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders will deploy to Iraq in January 2004, along with additional RMP elements.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what access is being given to Iraqi *(a)* civilians and *(b)* former military personnel to the type of biological monitoring for depleted uranium contamination that is afforded to United Kingdom personnel who served in Iraq. [145182]

Mr. Ingram: This is an issue for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) rather than for my Department. However, the planned United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) assessment of post-conflict environmental and human health issues in Iraq will include those relating to depleted uranium (DU). We continue to liaise with UNEP and to share information as part of our contribution to efforts to ensure that the Iraqi people and others are protected against ionizing radiation and hazards from whatever source. Although we have not received any request for information or support in relation to biological monitoring, full details of our biological monitoring policy are available to all at www.mod.uk/issues/depleted_uranium/du_biomonitoring.htm; we would be happy to provide advice to the CPA or UNEP if required.

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which British companies are known to have supplied *(a)* weapons and *(b)* weapons technology to Iraq in the 10 years prior to the Gulf war in 1991. [145295]

Nigel Griffiths: I have been asked to reply.

The issue of the export of defence equipment and dual-use goods from the United Kingdom to Iraq in the period 1984–1990 was the subject of the Inquiry by Sir Richard Scott (now Lord Scott of Foscote), copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House. The question relates to a period prior to the Government's decision to publish an annual report on strategic export controls.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the roles being undertaken by reservists in Iraq. [143734]

Mr. Ingram: The range of roles provided by reservists to support Operation TELIC broadly reflects those undertaken by the Regular Forces plus a number of specialist areas unique to the Reserves. The range includes: RN amphibious warfare advisers, logisticians, intelligence analysts, linguists, RN mine warfare specialists, media operations, combat engineers, amphibious bridging specialists, signallers, port operating specialists, NEC warfare specialists, movements personnel, medical personnel, meteorologists, aircrew, ground crew, railway specialists, POL operators, HGV drivers, cooks, ambulance crews, administrative staff and the Army and Royal Marine combat arms.

Legal Costs

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what legal costs have been incurred in defending the retention of Fisher and Wright in HM Armed Services following their release from prison. [145170]

Mr. Ingram: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 842W, indicating the totality of legal bills paid to date in defending Guardsmen Fisher and Wright. Of this sum approximately £11,000 was paid following their release from prison.

Military Personnel (Psychiatric Treatment)

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel received treatment at the Priory, Roehampton in the last year; and what the cost was. [144151]

Mr. Caplin: One member of the Services received treatment at the Priory, Roehampton. The cost of the admission and treatment was £73,778.

Territorial Army

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department provides to Territorial Army soldiers returning from overseas duty to secure employment. [145744]

Mr. Caplin: Reservists who are called out into permanent service benefit from employment protection under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985. Under Section 1 of that Act an employer is required to take back into his employment former employees who have completed called-out service. Should an employer fail to reinstate a reservist in accordance with the provisions of that Act, the reservist may apply to a Reinstatement Committee to hear his case. The Reinstatement Committee can order the employer to reinstate the reservist, or to pay compensation, or both. Failure to comply with an order of a Reinstatement Committee is a criminal offence, and an employer may be fined on summary conviction. All reservists are advised of this process on call out.

Typhoon

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what stability problems have been encountered on test flights of the Typhoon when flying with combat loads. [145644]

Mr. Ingram: No stability problems have been encountered to date on test flights of the Typhoon when flying with combat loads.

UK Sites (USA Occupation)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sites in the UK occupied by the US, giving in each case the *(a)* acreage and *(b)* purpose of occupation. [145147]

Mr. Caplin: The following table lists the sites made available to the United States Visiting Forces in the UK, together with their purpose of use and size in hectares.

Site/Purpose of use	*Hectares*
Main Operating Bases	
RAF Lakenheath	727.00
RAF Mildenhall	469.62
Standby Deployment Base	
RAF Fairford	470.64
Storage/Support Facilities	
RAF Alconbury	81.13
RAF Church Fenton	Presence
RAF Daws Hill	21.12
Defence Estates Eastcote	7.76
Glasgow Docks	0.10
High Wycombe offices	Presence
RAF Hythe	6.80
Kennington Barracks	0.11
Marchwood Military Port	1.93
RAF Molesworth	270.94
RAF Spadeadam	Presence
RAF Upwood	2.45
RAF Welford	300.16
RAF West Ruislip	13.96
Communications Facilities	
RAF Barford St. John Comms. Site	196.18
RAF Barkway	0.90
Botley Hill Communications Site	Presence
RAF Bovingdon	0.89
DCSA Chelveston	0.33
RAF Christmas Common	1.03
RAF Cold Blow Lane	0.14
RAF Croughton	278.95
RAF Daventry	0.70
RAF Digby	Presence
Dunkirk Communications Site	Presence
RAF Feltwell	129.48
RAF Menwith Hill	220.57
DCSA Oakhangar	Presence
DCSA St. Eval	6.09
RAF St. Mawgan	5.16
Swingate Communications Site	0.22
RAF Uxbridge	Presence

Those sites listed as "Presence" are where the US Visiting Forces have a small presence on site in certain buildings but do not have a measurable hectarage allocated to them.

In addition to the sites in the above table, the US Visiting Forces also have family quarters housing allocated to them, in a variety of locations in the UK.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to include wind turbines in the site development plans for Portsdown West and Porton Down; and if he will make a statement. [142198]

Mr. Caplin: The site development for Portsdown West and Porton Down will provide the opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of its built environment and therefore the planning will consider the use of renewable energy sources, including wind turbines.

All development plans will be subject to statutory consultations and the approval of relevant stakeholders, including the local planning authority.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Art Acquisition

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent on the acquisition of works of art in each year since 1997, broken down by amounts spent on *(a)* paintings and *(b)* sculpture; what the single most expensive piece of art purchased by his Department since 1997 has been; how much it cost; and what the total revenue raised by his Department through sales of its works of art has been since 1997. [142352]

Fiona Mactaggart: Since 1997 the Home Office has purchased seven paintings at a total cost of £525. These paintings were acquired for an office in Glasgow in August 2003 from a local visual arts company which specialises in developing projects for disabled adults and children, people with mental health problems, minority ethnic groups and homeless people. An art strategy is also being developed for the new Home Office in 2 Marsham Street. Part of the cost of this, which has not been finalised, will be met by the developer. No works of art have been sold since 1997.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 7 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Shamus-un-Nissa Kayani. [144635]

Mr. Blunkett: I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 12 December 2003.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 10 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. George Marneris. [144638]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to the letter from my right hon. Friend on 12 December.

Crime Reduction Initiatives

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much money has been invested, and how many retailers have benefited, *(a)* in Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East *(b)* in the north-east and *(c)* in total from the Capital Modernisation Fund to assist small retailers in deprived areas; [144746]

(2) what plans there are to develop the Capital Modernisation Fund to assist small retailers in deprived areas; and if he will make a statement. [144747]

Ms Blears: Over the three years of the Small Retailers in Deprived Areas Initiative (2001–04) £120,000 has been provided to Middlesbrough Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to improve the security and immediate environment of approximately 19 individual shops and essential businesses. £76,000 has been allocated to the Redcar and Cleveland Partnership helping 23 businesses. These two partnerships cover the Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East constituency.

A total of £1,241,018 has been provided to the North East region benefiting at least 1,319 shops.

This project has enabled £14.5 million to be allocated to projects in England and Wales, providing assistance to over 12,500 shops. Many more will have benefited indirectly from this funding. A small amount of the fund (£0.5 million) has been used for evaluation and running costs.

As part of the small retailers' scheme we are providing a national security training package for small businesses in crime prevention and reduction. The Association of Convenience Stores have been selected to run the scheme on behalf of the Home Office from December 2003 to March 2004. The training will target nearly 600 key people in local businesses nation-wide through 28 seminars. Seminars will be held in Middlesbrough on 20 January 2003 and in Redcar and Cleveland on 21 January 2003.

The SRDA initiative is a three year initiative which concludes at the end of March 2004. Financial provision for similar interventions to continue, if Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships wish, is made in the Building Safer Communities fund.

We will ensure that the successes of this initiative are disseminated widely and point to effective interventions which have been shown to have a beneficial impact on crime.

Criminal Cases Review Commission

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for review of alleged wrongful conviction upon indictment have been received during each of the last eight years by the Criminal Cases Review Commission; and how many cases in each year have been *(a)* ruled ineligible, *(b)* investigated with a decision of not to refer where the decision-maker was (i) a case review manager, (ii) a single commissioner and (iii) a panel of three Commissioners and *(c)* investigated with a decision to refer; [141816]

(2) how many applications for review of alleged wrongful conviction upon indictment have been received to date by the Criminal Cases Review Commission; how many *(a)* were ruled ineligible, *(b)* were completed with a decision not to refer and *(c)* were completed with a decision to refer; and how many applications in each case were from (i) unassisted applicants and (ii) legally assisted applicants. [141818]

Paul Goggins: The Commission's data systems have been developed over time and so full data are not available for all years. The Commission first received applications in 1997. In no case is a Case Review Manager the decision-maker. The most recent information on Committee decisions is that 97 per cent. of decisions not to refer were made by a single Commissioner and 3 per cent. were taken by a committee of three Commission members. Data on all applications is as follows and the most recent information on conviction types is that 92 per cent. of applications are for convictions on indictment.

	Applications	*Ineligible*	*Decision not to refer*	*Decisions to refer*
1997–98	1,103	248	51	11
1998–99	1,037	222	239	31
1999–2000	777	298	681	36
2000–01	800	257	808	45
2001–02	834	272	892	38
2002–03	932	299	652	35

The Commission's data do not cover legal assistance for all years. The most recent information (30 September 2003) is that 41 per cent. of applications under review at Stage 2 screen (where eligible cases are examined to see whether they can be reviewed with modest caseworker effort) have legal representation and 59 per cent. of those at Stage 2 (where eligible cases requiring considerable caseworker effort are reviewed).

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been received by the Complaints Manager at the Criminal Cases Review Commission in each of the last eight years; and of those complaints how many were *(a)* resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and *(b)* upheld. [141819]

Paul Goggins: The complaints received by the Commission and the number upheld are as follows:

	Complaints received	*Upheld*
1997–98	11	7
1998–99	15	2
1999–2000	34	10
2000–01	63	14
2001–02	69	9
2002–03	76	11
2003 to 30 November 2003	39	4

Complainant satisfaction is difficult to measure but only 13 complaints in total have been taken to Stage 2 of the Commission's complaints procedure following adjudication. The Commission is to introduce a feedback process for complainants.

Identity Cards

Mr. Allan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts concerning the mutual recognition of identity cards. [142154]

Beverley Hughes: There have been no recent discussions with European Union (EU) counterparts on mutual recognition of identity cards.

There are currently no EU standards for the content and format of identity cards, and it is for member states to decide whether and how to issue them. However there is mutual recognition in the sense that valid identity cards issued by EU member states are recognised as travel documents throughout the EU, and also as proof that the holder is an EU national entitled to exercise Treaty rights in any member state.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the costs of the identity card scheme in the first three years

of operation; and what proportion of set-up costs will be met from *(a)* charging and *(b)* existing departmental budgets. [144274]

Beverley Hughes: In his response to the hon. Member during his statement on identity cards on 11 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 178WS, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary set out our current best estimates of the set-up costs of the scheme over a three year period. These are £36 million, £60 million and £90 million, respectively. The proportion of these costs which will be funded from charges as opposed to from existing departmental budgets has not yet been decided.

Identity Fraud

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many incidents of identity theft have been reported to the police in each of the last 12 months; [143385]

(2) what statistics are gathered by his Department on identity fraud. [143387]

Beverley Hughes: It is not a criminal offence for a person simply to use another identity. However, false identities are often used to facilitate other offences such as deception and money laundering.

The police do not generally record incidents of identity theft because prosecutions are recorded for the offences facilitated by false identities.

Information and Technology Projects

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many information and technology projects have been initiated by his Department since 1994; [144271]

(2) if he will list the information technology projects that have been *(a)* terminated and *(b)* abandoned by his Department since 1994. [144272]

Fiona Mactaggart: The Home Office and its agencies (excluding non-departmental public bodies) have initiated 36 Information Technology (IT) projects since 1994. This covers IT projects *(a)* where the cost or value of the project exceeds £5 million or *(b)* are essential for delivery of core objectives or services. This does not include projects that were originally initiated by Home Office but are not now my responsibility as a result of Machinery of Government changes.

The Home Office has terminated one project since 1994. This was the Immigration and Nationality Directorate's Casework Programme. No projects have been abandoned.

Northern Ireland Troubles

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy to co-opt victims of the Troubles onto the Victims' Advisory Panel; [142755]

(2) how many people in Great Britain have made claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles; [142756]

(3) what representations he has received concerning the inclusion of the needs of victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles from Great Britain within the remit of the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses; [142823]

(4) if he will establish an interdepartmental group in the Home Office Victims Unit to study the needs of victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles from Great Britain; [142825]

(5) if he will set up an independent support network for victims of the Troubles. [142861]

Paul Goggins: The answers to the questions are as follows.

Any victim of a crime occurring in England and Wales can apply to be a member of the Victims Advisory Panel. The next recruitment campaign for lay members will take place in 2005. Civilian victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles who live in Great Britain can apply. None did so when we first advertised for members in 2002.

There are no centrally held statistics about claims for compensation from victims of terrorist crime before the introduction of the tariff-based scheme in April 1996. In the period between then and 11 September 2001, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority received 588 claims arising from incidents of terrorist bombings in Great Britain. There is no reliable way of giving a definitive breakdown between those related to the Troubles or to other terrorist incidents.

No specific representations have been received about including the needs of victims of the Troubles within the remit of the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses. The Commissioner, once appointed, will have a responsibility to promote and champion the needs of victims and witnesses of all crimes, who are resident in England and Wales.

The National Strategy for Victims and Witnesses published in July 2003 set out the Government's plans for improving services to all victims. Although not specifically identified as a group separate from others who are bereaved or seriously injured as a result of crime, victims of terrorist incidents in England and Wales are included within the strategy. Work to implement the strategy has now begun, although there are no immediate plans to set up a group to study the needs of the victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles from Great Britain.

There are already a number of independent victims' organisations operating in England and Wales at both national and local level, most notably the voluntary organisation, Victim Support, which this year received a grant of £30 million from the Government. Victim Support provides practical advice and emotional support to victims of all types of crime, including terrorist crime. If people who have been affected by the Troubles wish to set up their own independent support network, they are free to do so.

Passports (Secure Delivery)

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the projected cost per passport of the

secure delivery service announced on 28 November is; and what the total value of the contract with Special Mail Services Ltd. is. [143484]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* The secure delivery service provided by Special Mail Services Ltd. will cost £2.75 per passport including ancillary service provided. The total value of the contract will depend on the number of passports issued by United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS) but over a three year period, the contract is estimated to be worth up to £55 million.

Prison Spending

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the prisons budget was for each year since 1995; and what the prisons spending forecast is for each year up to 2009. [142987]

Paul Goggins: The table shows the actual costs of the Prison Service between 1995 and 2003. The figures for 1995–96 to 2000–01 are published in the annual Appropriation Accounts, and the figures for 2001–02 to 2003 are from the Cash Flow Statement in the annual accounts.

Table 1: Prisons Budget 1995 to 2003

£ millions

Financial year	*Current*	*Capital*	*Total*
1995–96	1,336.7	330.2	1,666.9
1996–97	1,388.5	220.1	1,608.6
1997–98	1,462.9	277.9	1,740.8
1998–99	1,611.7	200.4	1,812.1
1999–2000	1,696.8	149.6	1,846.4
2000–01	1,659.5	135.2	1,794.7
2001–02	1,758.4	99.5	1,857.9
2002–03	1,910.5	235.3	2,145.8

The budget plans for the years 2003–04 to 2005–06 are set out in the table. These figures are published in tables 2 and 3 of Section 6 of the Home Office Annual Departmental Report 2003. Both in-year and future year budgets are subject to review and amendment.

Table 2: Budget plans for the Prison Service 2003 to 2006

£ millions

Financial year	*Resource budget plans*	*Capital budget plans*
2003–04	2,331.462	294.796
2004–05	2,403.303	268.730
2005–06	2,520.342	166.730

There are no published budget plans for the years 2006–07 to 2008–09.

Probation Service

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the percentage change will be in *(a)* the National Probation Service and *(b)* the National Probation Directorate financial settlement for 2004–05. [141801]

Paul Goggins: A final decision about the budget for the National Probation Service, including the National Probation Directorate for 2004–05 has not yet been made.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the *(a)* Warwickshire, *(b)* Dorset, *(c)* Suffolk, *(d)* Norfolk and *(e)* Gloucestershire probation areas will receive less money in real terms during 2004–05 after performance-linked penalties and central recharging are taken into account. [141803]

Paul Goggins: A final decision about the budget for individual areas within the National Probation Service has not yet been made. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflator set by the Treasury is 2.5 per cent. for 2004–05. It is not expected that any of the above mentioned probation areas will have an increase in their main resource allocation of less than the GDP deflator, after performance-linked penalties and central recharging outside the control of the local areas are taken into account.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent on failed IT projects in the Probation Service in each year since 1994. [141804]

Paul Goggins: The National Probation Service Information Systems Strategy (NPSISS) ran from 1994 to 2001 and was the subject of a National Audit Office (NAO) report. A full breakdown of the cost of NPSISS can be found in the NAO report published on 26 April 2001, HC401 Session 2000–01. While the NAO identified significant weaknesses with the management of NPSISS, particularly in the development of the case record and management system, (CRAMS) they did not conclude that the project had 'failed'. As a result of NPSISS, 38 out of which 42 Areas were linked to a network which enabled them to communicate electronically between themselves as well as with the Directorate and other parts of the Home Office.

The National Probation Service was formed in April 2001. Prior to that date individual Probation Services undertook local IT projects. It is not possible to confirm whether the anticipated benefit of each scheme were achieved.

Terrorism

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what meetings of the pilot group of experts on terrorism from EU states and Europol have taken place since 25 June. [144250]

Mr. Blunkett: The informal pilot group held its second workshop on terrorist profiling at the headquarters of Europol on 20 November 2003, with UK representation. This meeting was essentially a stock take as the research needed to inform this long-term and complex project is on-going.

Volunteers in Action Programme

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide support for the Volunteers in Action programme. [143026]

Fiona Mactaggart: I would like to congratulate the Volunteers in Action on the amount of good works they have done over the years. As with many voluntary groups their work is invaluable for supporting active communities and I wish them well for the future.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Women Pensioners

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many women pensioners were means-tested in *(a)* 1997 and *(b)* 2002. [144481]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is not available in the format requested. The following figures include both single women and women who are partners of recipients.

In May 1997 there were 1,350,100 women aged 60 or over receiving income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, family credit and disability working allowance. In addition, it is probable that there were some other women who received housing benefit or council tax benefit but we are unable to estimate how many.

In May 2002 there were 1,341,400 women aged 60 or over receiving minimum income guarantee and income-based jobseeker's allowance. Including those who were receiving housing benefit and council tax benefit the number was 2,140,000.

Notes:

1. Figures subject to a degree of sampling variation.
2. 1,350,100 rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. 2,140,000 rounded to the nearest ten thousand.
4. Council tax benefit totals exclude any second adult rebate cases. Housing benefit figures exclude any extended payment cases.
5. Overlaps between benefits have been removed.

Source:

IAD Information Centre, 5 per cent. samples IS and JSA, 1 per cent. samples HB/CTB, and 100 per cent. sample DWA.

Chronic Pain

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many working days were lost in each of the past five years as a result of chronic back pain; and how many days were lost to mental illnesses. [140479]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Sheerman, dated 5 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number of working days lost because of chronic back pain and mental illnesses. (140479)

The available information from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows that, for the UK as a whole in the 12 month periods ending in August 2001, August 2002 and August 2003, respectively 117 million, 114 million and 108 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury. Comparable information is not available for earlier years.

Information about the types of illnesses or injuries which cause sickness absence is not collected in the LFS, so no figures for numbers of working days lost because of chronic back pain and mental illnesses are available.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to sampling error.

Occupational Deafness

Mr. Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to amend the criteria for entitlement to state benefit on the grounds of occupational deafness. [143459]

Mr. Browne: We have no current plans to amend the criteria for entitlement to Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit for occupational deafness.

However, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council completed a review of occupational deafness last year, all its recommendations have been accepted and amending legislation came into force on 22 September 2003.

Pension Credit

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many individuals are estimated to be eligible for pension credit in Wales in *(a)* 2003–04, *(b)* 2004–05, *(c)* 2005–06 and *(d)* 2006–07; [144628]

(2) what his Department's target is for the number of individuals who will be receiving pension credit in Wales in *(a)* 2003–04, *(b)* 2004–05, *(c)* 2005–06 and *(d)* 2006–07. [144629]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is not available. It is estimated that 250,000 households or 350,000 individuals in Wales are eligible for pension credit in 2003–04. As at the end of November 2003 there were 120,000 households (145,710 individuals) in Wales receiving pension credit. There is no departmental target for the number of individuals who will be receiving pension credit in Wales. The Department has a PSA target for at least 3 million pensioner households to be receiving pension credit in Great Britain (GB) by 2006, which is estimated to correspond to around 3.7 million individuals. Reliable estimates of households and individuals entitled to or in receipt of pension credit in future years are not available below GB level. We want all those eligible for pension credit to take up their entitlement.

Notes:

1. Estimates are based on the 2001–02 Family Resources Survey and are rounded to the nearest 50,000.
2. Recipients are based on 100 per cent. Generalised Matching Service (CMS) data at 14 November 2003 and have been rated up to give month end estimates.
3. Figures are for Government Office Region (GOR) of Wales. Government Office Regions are assigned by matching postcodes against the relevant ONS postcode directory.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Broadband

Ross Cranston: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information she has collated on the take-up of broadband in each of the last five years in *(a)* Dudley North, *(b)* the West Midlands and *(c)* England; and if she will make a statement. [143893]

Mr. Timms: Information on the take-up of broadband by Parliamentary Constituency is not available. The take-up of broadband in the West Midlands based on historical data from operators, the

number of households and businesses and availability by technology to the post sector level have been estimated by Analysys Consulting Ltd. as:

West Midlands

		Number
2002	Q4	122,914
2003	Q1	130,289
2003	Q3	186,249

On the same basis, the estimated combined total for all English regions for the same periods is:

English regions

		Number
2002	Q4	1,226,767
2003	Q1	1,590,945
2003	Q3	2,355,737

Data for earlier years have not been collated.

Oftel has collated data on the estimated number of UK broadband subscribers since November 2000. Updated figures are published regularly on the Oftel website http://www.oftel.gov.uk From 29 December 2003, data will be published on the Ofcom website.

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her estimate is of the number of broadband connected personal computers in the UK which have, unknown to the owner of the computer, been hijacked by computer programmes written by internet criminals and which also have the potential to serve as a platform for the spread of fraud, spam, paedophile images and organised crime over the internet; and what steps she is taking to counter this problem. [144391]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* We do not collect data on this and are not aware of reliable estimates. We do undertake a regular survey of information security breaches in the business community based on a sample of one thousand companies. We use the results of this survey to inform our message to business about the importance of protecting information assets and the advice we give, particularly to smaller companies, about techniques and technologies to prevent problems. The Home Office, as a supplement to the British Crime Survey, surveys households' experience of breaches of this kind, though obviously victim surveys only identify those who are aware their machine has been used in this way. The activities described are criminal acts and should be reported to the police when users become aware of them.

Business Innovation

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what targets her Department has set for improving business innovation; and if she will make a statement on the UK's *(a)* G7 ranking, *(b)* European ranking and *(c)* world ranking in business innovation. [143136]

Ms Hewitt: My Department's Public Service Agreement includes a target to increase the rate of business innovation. On 20 November, my Department published an economic report, "Competing in the Global Economy—The Innovation Challenge", that reviewed existing evidence on the UK's innovation performance. The report shows that UK innovation performance across a range of measures was around—or below—average relative to other advanced economies although some indicators have moved in the right direction in recent years. For example, after a period of decline of Research and Development spending from 1.5 per cent. of GDP in 1981, to 1.16 per cent. in 1997, we have seen an upturn in more recent years as summarised in the following table.

	Per cent.
1998	1.17
1999	1.23
2000	1.19
2001	1.23
2002	1.24

A report on the Review of Innovation that we have undertaken this year was published on Wednesday 17 December.

Business Investment

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact that falling business investment has on economic growth. [143430]

Ms Hewitt: Business investment per worker has increased over the last decade in the UK, although it has been subject to a cyclical decline since 2001, in common with our major G7 competitors. Investment drives long run growth, and the Government are committed to ensuring that the UK provides a business environment where investment can flourish. That is why the Government have made major reforms to the macro-economic framework, which have helped to deliver low and stable inflation and to avoid large, destabilising fluctuations in output. Economic stability helps businesses plans for the long-term, giving them the confidence to invest. The Government have also reformed the corporate tax regime to give powerful incentives to invest, improved institutional investment arrangements through the Higgs and Myners reviews, and removed the regulatory barriers to investment in the planning system.

Business Support Schemes

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has happened to those business support schemes in existence in November 2002 which have not been closed to new business, have not been devolved elsewhere and do not remain open to new business. [144236]

Nigel Griffiths: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's answer to the hon. Member's earlier question on 10 November 2003, *Official Report*, columns 20–21W, listed the 39 schemes that were no longer open to new business, and cited two

schemes that had been transferred on the Regional Development Agencies. This leaves the 52 schemes that are currently open to new business.

In November 2002 over 100 business support schemes were considered to be operational. The figure of 93 reflects in part a consolidation of the previous count. We had, for example, identified and counted separately each of the Link research programmes; these are now aggregated into the reduced total and counted as a single scheme.

Colombia

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will publish the list of licences granted for trade with Colombia which involve the export of military equipment. [144924]

Nigel Griffiths: Details of export licences granted for Colombia are published in the Government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls. Copies of the Annual Report are available from the Libraries of the House.

Commission for Equality and Human Rights

Mr. Borrow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which agency *(a)* an employee and *(b)* an employer should approach for (i) legal advice and (ii) advocacy on discrimination and harassment on the grounds of (A) sexual orientation and (B) religion and belief in advance of the establishment of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. [144405]

Ms Hewitt: The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations were introduced on 1 and 2 December respectively offering protection from discrimination in employment and vocational training. Legislation on these grounds will be enforced in the same way as other employment equality laws: through the Employment Tribunals and the Courts.

The DTI website has information on the legislation aimed at employers and employees (www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality). ACAS, the independent employment relations service, has produced impartial guidance on the sexual orientation and religion or belief regulations and the workplace. It includes possible scenarios and frequently asked questions. The ACAS guidance is available on their website (www.acas.org.uk) and as a free printed booklet. These are both useful sources of information on rights and responsibilities under the new legislation which will help employers to avoid discrimination and help employees recognize where they may have been discriminated against.

Both employers and employees can seek practical advice from ACAS via their national helpline (08457 47 47 47). Employers may also receive advice from their own HR specialists, legal representatives, trade association or business representative organisation.

As with other employment legislation, individuals who wish to make a complaint to a tribunal are able to enlist the support of their trade union, law centres, Pro Bono groups or voluntary organisations with a particular interest in their case, as well seeking independent legal advice from a solicitor. In some cases, they may be eligible for legal advice and assistance under the Community Legal Service (CLS) legal help scheme. The CLS website, 'Just Ask!' (www.justask.org.uk) provides co-ordinated access to several hundred legal information and help websites. Users can use the search facility on 'Just Ask!' to locate local or national legal service providers who can help with their problems. Individuals can also call into their local Citizens Advice Bureau, where free legal advice and representation may be available.

Correspondence

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Edinburgh West of 30 September on outsourcing of jobs abroad; and what the reasons were for the delay in replying. [143722]

Mr. Timms: I apologise to the hon. Member for the delay in responding to his letter. This was due to an administrative oversight. A reply has been sent to his office today.

Departmental Grants

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much funding has been provided by her Department to finance the Business Volunteer Mentoring scheme that is managed by the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies since inception of the scheme. [145517]

Nigel Griffiths: Since its inception, in January 2000, my Department has provided approximately £3.5 million to fund the Business Volunteer Mentoring scheme.

Disabled Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many senior civil servants in her Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144982]

Jacqui Smith: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics web-site at http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

This information is also made available in the Libraries of the House. The latest statistics show staffing data as at 1 April 2003. The data shows that in my Department there are 10 senior civil servants with a disability. This is 3.4 per cent. of the total number of senior civil servants in my Department.

Electricity Act

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effects of the European Water Framework Directive and European habitat regulations on section 36 consents under the Electricity Act 1989. [144188]

Mr. Timms: In deciding whether consent should be granted for individual projects under section 36 of the Electricity Act, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take into account a

range of interests and consult with a number of relevant statutory bodies including the nature conservation agencies and the Environment Agency. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would expect any advice received from the statutory bodies as a result of the consultation to have regard to the legislation applicable to the functions for which they are responsible and for their advice to reflect their expertise in the implementation of such legislation.

Entrepreneurs

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of people going into business or becoming self-employed; what targets have been set; if she will make a statement on progress to date; and what estimate she has made of the number of people who were considering going into business or becoming self-employed in each year since 1997. [143042]

Nigel Griffiths: There are a number of Government support initiatives aimed at helping those thinking about starting a business. These include:

A comprehensive range of start-ups service delivered through Business Link and other outlets in England

The publication of the No-nonsense guide to Government rules and regulations for setting up your business

The launch of businesslink.gov.

In 2001, 12 per cent. of adults in England were considering going into business or becoming self-employed. The DTI has a target to increase this to 14 per cent. by 2005.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether different standards on promoting equal opportunities will apply to *(a)* companies working on government-funded contracts and *(b)* those engaging in purely private business. [140532]

Fiona Mactaggart: I have been asked to reply.

Private sector companies, including those carrying out public sector contracts, are subject to the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. These prohibit discrimination, respectively, on the grounds of sex, on racial grounds and on the grounds of disability, in the fields of employment, training, education, the provision of goods and services and the provision of housing. From 2 December 2003, it has also been unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion or belief in the fields of employment and vocational training.

The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A) placed a general duty on listed bodies to have due regard to the need:

(a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and

(b) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

The duty applies to public bodies only listed in the Schedule introduced by the RR(A)A. The duty does not apply to private sector bodies.

However, the Government does not want to see a dilution of the general duty in relation to functions which have been contracted out, and bodies to which the duty applies will need to be mindful of their obligations when discharging their functions through others. In placing contracts, for example, such bodies might want to consider whether the contract should be used to specify actions that the contractor should take to ensure that the body in question does not fail to meet its obligations in this area. This does not, however, mean the duty is transferred to the contractor. The responsibility for complying with the duty in relation to public functions relevant to it remains at all times with the listed body.

Equal Treatment at Work Directive

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research her Department has carried out into the preparedness of United Kingdom companies for the introduction of the Equal Treatment at Work Directive. [142829]

Ms Hewitt: Most of the provisions of the amended Equal Treatment Directive are already reflected in existing Great Britain legislation. There has already been some consultation on the principles of some of the legislative provisions of the amended Equal Treatment Directive, and we said then we planned further consultation and provided a target of late 2005 for implementation.

The Employment Directive makes discrimination in employment and vocational training against an individual on the grounds of his or her religion or belief or sexual orientation unlawful. We have held three consultations since the Employment Directive was first drawn up. We have ensured where possible that the new legislation has been introduced in a way that is consistent with existing long-standing equality legislation. Since the summer DTI has held a series of awareness raising seminars for employers. ACAS has produced guidance to help employers on which they consulted widely and is available online at www.acas.org.uk

Foreign Debt

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what guarantees the Export Credits Guarantee Department has issued to each heavily indebted poor country in each year since 1997; what the *(a)* value and *(b)* project type was in each instance; and what the total outstanding debt owed by each country is (i) in total and (ii) broken down by (A) amounts at risk, (B) unrecovered claims and (C) moratorium interest accrued on the unrecovered claims. [144834]

Mr. Mike O'Brien *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Since 1997 ECGD has only supported business in three Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, namely Vietnam, Ghana and Tanzania. Vietnam is a sustainable HIPC requiring no debt restructuring since the early 1990s. Ghana, until relatively recently, was also regarded as a sustainable HIPC but is now benefiting from HIPC debt treatment. Tanzania reached its Completion Point in December 2001 and all historic debt was written off by the UK. The business supported was as follows:

1997 Vietnam—Aircraft, value £21 million.

1998 Vietnam—Paper Mill Equipment, value £6 million.

1999 Vietnam—Coal Fired Power Plant, value £24 million.

1999 Vietnam—Investment in Sugar Refinery, value £16 million.

1997 Ghana—Capital Equipment and Related Services, value £7 million.

1997 Ghana—Waste Water Project, value £17 million.

1997 Ghana—Road Proj ect, value £14 million.

1998 Ghana—Capital Equipment and Related Services, value £6 million.

1999 Ghana—Kotoka airport project, value £19 million.

2000 Tanzania—Investment in Water and Sewerage Contract, value £2 million.

The future amounts at risk on Ghana, Vietnam and Tanzania are £61 million, £23 million and £1 million respectively.

Outstanding balances on heavily indebted poor countries' rescheduled sovereign debt as at December 2003

All values in £ million

Market	*Unrecovered claims*	*Capitalised interest*	*Arrears of interest*	*Total rescheduled debt*
Angola[1]	51.483	4.437	71.744	127.664
Cameroon	27.081	32.561	0.000	59.642
Central African Republic	0.161	0.163	0.037	0.361
Congo	58.076	82.268	19.497	159.841
Cote D'Ivoire	6.435	9.567	0.137	16.139
D.R. Congo	16.304	52.728	0.000	69.032
Ethiopia	11.174	0.460	0.007	11.641
Ghana	45.682	0.821	0.000	46.503
Guinea	0.932	2.824	0.000	3.756
Guyana	11.638	21.218	0.000	32.856
Kenya[1]	16.522	2.337	0.000	18.859
Liberia	6.229	0.000	14.176	20.405
Madagascar	11.822	11.607	0.000	23.429
Malawi	0.353	0.007	0.000	0.360
Nicaragua	0.368	0.588	0.000	0.956
Niger	3.745	4.135	0.000	7.880
Senegal	0.666	0.693	0.000	1.359
Sierra Leone	0.957	2.435	0.000	3.392
Somalia	11.461	3.694	16.370	31.525
Sudan	91.643	33.094	405.718	530.455
Togo	9.113	5.206	4.869	19.188
Vietnam[1]	5.683	4.422	0.000	10.105
Zambia	68.949	94.040	0.000	162.989
Totals:	456.477	369.305	532.555	1,358.337

[1] indicates that this is a Sustainable HIPC. All other markets are Unsustainable HIPCs.

Identity Cards

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the implications of the introduction of compulsory identity cards for her Department. [142415]

Ms Hewitt: My Department has been fully involved in discussions on the benefits and costs of a national identity card scheme. The introduction of such a scheme is a long-term undertaking and my Department will be involved in on-going analysis of its implications.

As the Home Office document "Identity Cards the Next Steps" (November 2003 Cm 6020) made clear, the Government will be

> "working closely with business—particularly small business—trade unions and others to design the system to maximise the benefits and minimise the compliance costs to law-abiding businesses and to develop an effective enforcement system that will deal with illegal workers and the minority of businesses that deliberately flout the law."

Industrial Development Unit

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many grants and of what value have been made by the Industrial Development Unit in her Department; and how many new jobs have been created as a result of these in the last five years broken down by region. [145758]

Jacqui Smith: The Industrial Development Unit lead on the appraisal of Regional Selective Assistance applications for assistance of £2 million or more. Decisions are made by Ministers. Details of cases over the five years ending 30 September 2003, are as follows:

Region	*Offers accepted (number)*	*Value (£ million)*	*Expected jobs (new and safeguarded)*
East Midlands	2	9.95	2,211
North East	9	102.84	7,215
North West	6	73.94	5,237
South East	2	7.50	631
South West	3	11.71	1,210
West Midlands	6	48.00	5,322
York/Humberside	4	13.01	1,068
Total	32	266.95	22,894

Legislation

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary legislation sponsored by her Department in 2002–03 was introduced to implement EU requirements. [141130]

Ms Hewitt: My Department sponsored four Bills during the 2002–03 session, of which 25 per cent. implemented EU requirements.

Of the 141 statutory instruments put through Parliament by my Department in 2002–03 session, 26 per cent. were introduced to implement EU requirements.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Hepburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures have been taken to promote the manufacturing industry within schools. [145120]

Jacqui Smith: We published the Government's Manufacturing Strategy in May 2002—the first such strategy for 30 years—which we developed in partnership with industry, trade unions and other stakeholders, following a summit meeting on the challenges facing manufacturing held in December 2001. We are working closely with industry and other stakeholders to create a high value and high skill manufacturing sector that attracts young people as an exciting and innovative area of work.

We are supporting a number of key initiatives in order to promote the manufacturing industry within schools. For example, SETNET (The Science, Engineering, Technology and Maths Network) operates through a UK wide network to encourage young people to take an interest in these areas, and to understand the opportunities that a career in industry can offer.

Many of the new Sector Skills Councils are also helping to promote careers in manufacturing. For example, SEMTA—the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies—runs several schemes to promote careers in industry to young people, including an Engineering Careers Information Service.

Advantage West Midlands and the West Midlands Manufacturing Advisory Service are working in collaboration with the Manufacturing Foundation to support the Inside Manufacturing Enterprise regional company visit programme, which gives both businesses and schools access to some of the best manufacturing and engineering companies in the West Midlands.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the change in manufacturing sector investment over the last five years; and if she will make a statement. [143425]

Ms Hewitt: Government's Manufacturing Strategy, published in May 2002, identified the UK's long-standing weakness in investment as a key factor for the gap with our main competitors in manufacturing productivity. Manufacturing investment has declined from £20.4 billion in 1998 to £14.6 billion in 2002, due in part to weakness of external demand, spare capacity and increased uncertainty about the prospects for the global economy. It is also the case that UK manufacturing investment is cyclical with respect to the UK economy. The accelerating economic growth currently being experienced by the UK is likely to engender stronger manufacturing investment, albeit with a lag. This is consistent with the CBI's November 2003 forecast (Economic and Business Outlook) that UK manufacturing investment will grow by 0.8 per cent. in 2004 and 4.8 per cent. in 2005.

The Government are taking action to provide a climate conducive to investment for the long-term in UK manufacturing, by maintaining a stable macro-economic framework, together with measures such as reforming capital gains tax; making permanent enhanced capital allowances for small and medium sized firms; introducing the R&D tax credit for small and large firms; establishing Regional Venture Capital Funds; and extending the Small Firm Loan Guarantee.

The Pre-Budget Report contained a number of announcements that further build on this, including: measures to overcome barriers to raising finance for small business, notably a pathfinder round of Enterprise Capital Funds and proposed enhancements to Venture Capital Trusts and the Enterprise Investment Scheme. It also announced a new, clearer and more accessible R&D tax credit definition and extension of the scope of qualifying costs.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact that changes in manufacturing investment will have on the competitiveness of UK businesses. [143428]

Ms Hewitt: The Government's Manufacturing Strategy, published in May 2002, has identified the UK's long-standing weakness in investment as a key factor for the gap with our main competitors in manufacturing productivity. Manufacturing investment has declined from £20.4 billion in 1998 to £14.6 billion in 2002, due in part to weakness of external demand, spare capacity and increased uncertainty about the prospects for the global economy. It is also the case that UK manufacturing investment is cyclical with respect to the UK economy. The accelerating economic growth currently being experienced by the UK is likely to engender stronger manufacturing investment, albeit with a lag. This is consistent with the CBI's November 2003 forecast (Economic and Business Outlook) that UK manufacturing investment will grow by 0.8 per cent. in 2004 and 4.8 per cent. in 2005.

As explained in the UK Productivity and Competitiveness Indicators 2003, investment is one of the five key drivers of productivity and thus competitiveness identified by the Government. Investment in physical plant, machinery and buildings helps make workers more productive and is a way of embodying new technology in the production process. As such, investment is vital to manufacturing's long-term prosperity and the Government are committed to creating an environment where such investment can flourish. That is why the Government have reformed the macro economic framework and are undertaking extensive reform of the product, labour and capital markets. For example, in terms of capital markets, the Government have reformed capital gains tax; made permanent enhanced capital allowances for small and medium sized firms; introduced the R&D tax credit for small and large firms; established Regional Venture Capital Funds; and extended the Small Firm Loan Guarantee.

The Pre-Budget Report contained a number of announcements that further build on this, including: measures to overcome barriers to raising finance for small business, notably a pathfinder round of Enterprise Capital Funds and proposed enhancements to Venture Capital Trusts and the Enterprise Investment Scheme. It also announced a new, clearer and more accessible R&D tax credit definition and extension of the scope of qualifying costs.

Ministerial Meetings

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she last met the Chairman of British Midland; and if she will make a statement. [144233]

Ms Hewitt: I have not met the Chairman of BMI British Midlands in an official capacity.

Motor Industry

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much funding has been given by her Department to the Rover Task Force in each year since it was created. [142123]

Jacqui Smith: The information requested is as follows:

Funding for Rover Task Force recommendations by financial year

	(£000)
2000–01	[1]10,238,718
2001–02	[2]6,981,106
2002–03	[3]11,318,157
2003–04	[3]20,935,848

[1] Interim Proposals

[2] Interim Proposals, Modernisation and Diversification

[3] Modernisation, Diversification and Regeneration

We provided the substantial amount of £129 million to implement the recommendations of the Rover Task Force. Some £11 million has been spent on actions which needed to be taken immediately, for example to support the automotive supply chain. A further £17 million has supported the Modernisation of the automotive supply chain and nearly £20 million has been used for Diversification, to support and encourage businesses to engage in new activity. In addition £22 million has been agreed to create three High Tech corridors to attract and develop more high tech and high value added businesses. Overall up to March 2003 £28 million of these amounts has actually been spent and further £21 million is expected to be spent in 2003–04.

We also agreed an overall sum of £2 million to kickstart initiatives in the North Staffordshire area. £10 million was made available to Advantage West Midlands to buy a strategic site in Birmingham for future industrial development. In addition £42 million has been provided for good quality Regional Selective Assistance projects in the region. Some £5 million of the actual £129 million is not yet allocated to specific.

Nuclear Safety Advisory Committee

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the section of the Triennial Report of the nuclear safety advisory committee, issued on 9 December 2003, on the environmental hazards posed by the high level radioactive waste tanks at Sellafield. [144508]

Mr. Timms: The Nuclear Safety Advisory Committee's Trienniel Report covers the period 1999–2001. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published detailed reports into the storage of high level radioactive waste at Sellafield. The most recent report, in HSE's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate's Newsletter of February 2003, states that:

> "Overall, BNFL has made satisfactory progress with all the follow-on work from the February 2000 report and there are no short-term matters of significant concern".

Oil-fired Appliances

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland undertake (i) installation and (ii) maintenance of oil-fired domestic central heating systems. [143071]

Ms Hewitt: There are many companies within the UK, ranging from major boiler manufacturing companies such as Baxi Potterton and Worcester-Bosch, to small "one man" companies who install and maintain domestic central heating boilers and systems. Many are registered with the Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) and I would refer my hon. Friend to OFTECs own website—http://www.oftec.org/—which gives access to a comprehensive list of these companies.

Post Offices

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Royal Mail is required to conduct environmental impact studies when considering the closure of a large number of post office outlets in urban areas, with particular reference to the effects on the use of private cars to access post offices. [144174]

Mr. Timms: There is no such requirement. The urban network programme is designed to manage change in the urban post office branch network by closing branches where there is oversupply and poor viability and investing in branches which continue to serve the area in order to prevent unmanaged decline of the network. In putting forward proposals under this programme, Post Office Ltd undertakes extensive analysis of an area, using a modelling system showing where customers live and where they shop, and how demand for post office services is currently met. It also shows overlaps in provision where two or more branches are chasing the same customer base and where the network may need to change to create viable businesses while ensuring that branches are still accessible to the customers in the area. Checks are made of local authority plans, environmental and transport information, local shopping habits, and other local developments and features are assessed on site visits. Each closure proposal is subject to a six week public consultation in accordance with the Code of Practice agreed with Postwatch.

At the end of the programme, 95 per cent. of the urban population will still live within a mile of the nearest post office and the majority within half a mile.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what responsibility for defining exceptional circumstances in relation to closure under the network reinvention programme of post offices in the 10 per cent. most deprived wards lies with *(a)* her Department, *(b)* the Royal Mail Group, *(c)* Post Office Ltd. and *(d)* Postwatch. [145054]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Responsibility for defining exceptional circumstances in relation to closure under the network reinvention programme of post offices in the 10 per cent. most deprived wards and which are more than half a mile from the next post office rests with Post Office Ltd. All closure proposals are, however, subject to public consultation under the Code of Practice agreed between Post Office Ltd. and Postwatch.

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many proposals for closure have been made under the Urban Reinvention

Programme for the Post Office network; how many closures have been made; how many such proposals have been reversed following consultation; what the locations are of post offices which have been reprieved following consultation; and what the reasons were for those branches remaining open; [143559]

(2) how many and what proportion of sub-postmasters *(a)* have been offered compensation to close under the Urban Reinvention Programme, *(b)* have applied to close with compensation and *(c)* have applied to close with compensation and been refused. [143560]

Mr. Timms *[holding answers 17 December 2003]:* Decisions on post office closure proposals under the urban reinvention programme following public consultation are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Regional Development Agencies

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list, for each regional development agency, its board members showing *(a)* for councillor members, their party and local authority and *(b)* for other members, any declared party affiliation and the principal business or voluntary organisation to which they belong. [145060]

Jacqui Smith: RDA Boards are chaired by business people and at least 50 per cent. of Board members have business experience. Each Board has a maximum of 15 members. Ministers have given a commitment that four will be elected local Councillors and one will have knowledge of rural issues. The balance will have backgrounds in Trade Unions, the voluntary and community sector and higher/further education interests.

Board members are there to further the success of the RDA. They should not consider themselves to be the delegates of a particular group or body, but take into account the interests of the region as a whole.

The following table lists the people currently serving on the boards of England's Regional Development Agencies. For those who were appointed to positions allocated for councillors the table gives the relevant authority and the party they represent on that authority.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice, which is followed when making appointments to the Regional Development Agency Boards, requires that when announcing the appointments any press release should include details of the appointee's response to the political activity question. If no political activity has been declared this should be made clear. This information is therefore set out in the biographies of the Board members.

Biographies for all Board members are available in the Libraries of the House.

Name	*Party*	*Local authority*
Advantage West Midlands		
Nick Paul—(Chair)		
Richard Barnes		
Isabella Moore		
Norman Price		
Tony Sealey		
Ahmed Hassam		
Julie Haney		
David Smith		
Michael Oakes		
Susan Davis	(Lab)	Telford and Wrekin Council
Paul Tilsley	(Lib Dem)	Birmingham City Council
Richard Hyde	(Con)	Warwickshire County Council
Roger Lawrence	(Lab)	Wolverhampton City Council
Michael Sterling		
Bill Holmes		
East of England Development Agency		
Richard Ellis—(Chair)		
Marco Cereste		
Leo Murray		
Chris Paveley		
Yasmin Shariff		
George Kieffer		
Patricia Holtom		
John Snyder		
Ruth Bagnall	(Lab)	Cambridge City Council
Sal Brinton	(Lib Dem)	Cambridgeshire County Council
Stephen Castle	(Con)	Essex County Council
Bryony Rudkin	(Lab)	Suffolk County Council
Roger Ali		
Karen Livingstone		
Tim Wilson		
East Midlands Development Agency		
Derek Mapp—(Chair)		
Jane Bradford		
Bryan Carr		
Valerie Dwyer		
Ron Whittaker		
Samantha Gemmell		
Jonathan McLeod		
Peter Ramsden		
Kashmir Bilgan	(Lab)[1]	Melton Borough Council
Graham Chapman	(Lab)	Nottingham City Council
Andrew Scarborough	(Lab)[1]	Wellingborough Council
Ross Willmott	(Lab)	Leicester City Council
Neville Jackson		
Patricia Morgan-Webb		
Rita Patel		
North West Development Agency		
Bryan Gray—(Chair)		
John Dunning		
Dennis G. Mendoros		
Anil Ruia		
Neville Chamberlain		
Brenda Smith		
Robert Johnston		
Joe Dwek		
Richard Leese	(Lab)	Manchester City Council
Pauleen Lane	(Lab)	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Michael Storey	(Lib Dem)	Liverpool City Council
Marie Rimmer	(Lab)	St. Helens Council
Sir Martin Harris		
Maureen Williams		
Dave McCall		
One North East		
Margaret Fay—(Chair)		
Richard Maudslay		
Geoffrey Hodgson		
Christopher Edwards		
Tim Cantle Jones		
Jane Nolan		
Chey Garland		
John Cuthbert		
Philip Hughes	(Ind)	Teesdale District Council
David Walsh	(Lab)[2]	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Christine Smith	(Lab)	Durham County Council
Keith Taylor	(Lab)	Newcastle City Council
Jackie Fisher		
Barbara Dennis		
Kevin Rowan		

Name	Party	Local authority
South East England Development Agency		
James Brathwaite—(Chair)		
Janis Kong		
Mary McAnally		
Peter Read		
Robert Douglas		
Terry Mills		
John Peel		
Sarah Hohler	(Con)	Kent County Council
Keith House	(Lib Dem)	Eastleigh Borough Council
Rob Anderson	(Lab)	Slough Unitary Council
Peter Jones	(Con)	Rother District Council
Clive Booth		
Elizabeth Brighouse		
Poul Christensen		
Phil Wood		
South West of England Regional Development Agency		
Juliet Williams—(Chair)		
Nicholas Buckland		
Brian Kemp		
Mike Leece		
Jeremy Pope		
Colin Skellett		
Henry Studholme		
Judith Reynolds		
Robin Nicholl	(Lab)[3]	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Catherine Bakewell	(Lib Dem)	Somerset County Council
Duncan Hames	(Lib Dem)	West Wiltshire District Council
Christine Reid	(Lab)	North Wiltshire District Council
Nigel Costley		
Jonathan Porritt		
Eric Thomas		
Yorkshire Forward		
Terry Hodgkinson—(Chair)		
Brian Greenwood		
Richard Gregory		
Lord Haskins		
Dr. Christopher King		
Julie Kenny		
John Napier		
John Spencer		
Eileen Bosomworth	(Con)	Scarborough Borough Council
Kathryn Pinnock	(Lib Dem)	Kirklees Council
Stephen Houghton	(Lab)	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Nicholas Dakin	(Lab)	North Lincolnshire Council
Adeeba Malik		
Stella Guy		
Robert Boucher		

[1] These Board members lost their seats in the local elections in May 2003, they are not required to resign but they will stand down from the board when their first term of appointment ends on 13 December 2004.

[2] This Board member lost his seat in the local elections in May 2003, he is not required to resign but will stand down from the board when his first term of appointment ends on 13 December 2004.

[3] This Board member did not stand as a candidate in the local elections in May 2003 he is not required to resign but will stand down from the board when his first term of appointment ends on 13 December 2004.

Regulations

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the *(a)* number and *(b)* cost of regulations imposed on business by her Department since 1997. [143439]

Ms Hewitt: The number of Statutory Instruments (SIs) that this Department has passed is as follows.

	Number
1997	130
1998	135
1999	178
2000	148
2001	126
2002	109

Only a small proportion of SIs have a significant impact on business. For example, of the 109 SIs produced in 2002, 11 have produced cost savings for business and 77 have had negligible or no impact. A regulatory impact assessment is produced for all SIs that have a cost to or benefit for business, and copies are available from the Libraries of the House.

The Government are committed to regulating only where necessary and with as light a touch as possible. However, regulations are necessary for creating open, dynamic markets and introducing minimum standards. It is important not to confuse the costs of minimum standards with red tape: over 1 million workers have benefited from the national minimum wage and over 3 million people have gained an entitlement to four weeks paid annual leave.

Royal Mail

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional support will be provided to Royal Mail if Postcomm's proposals to change its universal service obligations are permitted. [143025]

Mr. Timms: Universal service obligations are a matter for the Regulator, Postcomm. Postcomm are currently seeking views, via a consultation process that runs through to mid-February, on their proposals which aim to clarify precisely which services make up the universal service in the UK and how they should be provided by Royal Mail. It is Postcomm's primary responsibility to exercise its functions in a manner which it considers is best calculated to ensure the provision of a universal service, as set out in the Postal Services Act 2000.

Small Businesses

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small business schemes have been *(a)* launched and *(b)* proposed by (i) her Department and (ii) other Government departments since November 2002. [144209]

Nigel Griffiths: Since November 2002, four schemes supporting small businesses have been launched.

These are:

The grant for Research and Development (replacing the Smart scheme)

Extension of the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

Grant for Investigating an Innovative Idea

No activities have been proposed which have not been launched.

These four schemes are those which fall within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Schemes operated, or proposed, by other Government Departments are the responsibility of their respective ministers.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with the Treasury regarding *(a)* the decision to backdate payments under section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 and *(b)* the impact this will have on small businesses. [145237]

Nigel Griffiths: Section 660A-660G of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 is a long standing piece of anti-avoidance legislation which prevents avoidance of tax by, for example, a taxpayer with a higher rate of tax transferring income to someone who is liable at a lower rate.

The legislation when applied does not impact on small business but on the very small number of owners who set out to exploit the system and avoid tax.

The DTI has regular contact with the Inland Revenue in relation to the way legislation applies to the owners of SMEs.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the cost to small businesses of complying with new legislation introduced in each year since 1997. [145257]

Nigel Griffiths: A regulatory impact assessment is produced for all regulations that have a cost to or benefit for business and copies are available from the Libraries of the House.

Venture Capital

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent meetings she has had with leading universities to discuss improving their access to venture capital. [140531]

Ms Hewitt: Ministers and officials in my Department are in regular contact with universities to discuss a range of issues including funding. Although neither myself or my noble Friend the Minister for Science and Innovation has had any recent meetings with universities specifically to discuss venture capital, it has formed part of many of the discussions which my noble Friend has had with universities and venture capitalists in the last year. The OST has been supporting universities' access to venture capital through University Challenge and the Higher Education Innovation Fund.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Thornborough Henges

11. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the archaeological value of the Thornborough henges near Nosterfield. [145837]

Estelle Morris: The outstanding archaeological value of the Thornborough Henge site has been recognised by the statutory protection the site enjoys. Recent research commissioned by English Heritage has reinforced that view.

Sports Coaching

12. **Ms Munn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what action her Department is taking to improve access to sports coaching for children after school. [145838]

Tessa Jowell: My Department is working closely with Sport England to create 3,000 full and part-time Community Sports Coaches by 2006. Community Sports Coaches will work across a range of schools, clubs and local authorities to ensure that the maximum number of young people benefit. This will support delivery of the PSA target that I share with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to increase the percentage of school children who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high quality physical education and school sport within—and beyond—the curriculum to 75 per cent. by 2006.

Performing Arts

13. **Helen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to increase public access to national theatre, opera and ballet companies. [145839]

Estelle Morris: One of my Department's strategic priorities is to open up our cultural institutions to the wider community. This is reflected in our Public Service Agreement, which includes increasing arts attendance by under-represented groups. We are working with Arts Council England towards increasing diversity among audiences.

Museum Closures

14. **Shona McIsaac:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement about recent museum closures. [145840]

Estelle Morris: The Government have no direct role in the provision of local authority or independent museum services. However, through the Renaissance in the Regions programme we are providing significant support for major regional museums. As the programme develops, its benefits will spread throughout the museum sector in each region.

Sand Yachting

15. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what her Department's responsibilities towards sand yachting are. [145841]

Mr. Caborn: Sport England recognise sand and land yachting as a sport, although it falls into the category deemed as an extreme sport.

Sport England are in discussion with the British Federation of Sand and Land Yacht Clubs. The British Federation of Sand and Land Yacht Clubs are seeking funding for a national development officer.

Sport England have made two awards to British Landsailing one of £47,600 for the purchase of a national fleet of 60 land yachts. An Award for All grant was given in February 2002 of £2,230.

British Horse Racing

16. **Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent discussions she has had with the Office of Fair Trading with regard to their investigation into the control of British horse racing; and if she will make a statement. [145842]

Mr. Caborn: There have been no discussions, and the Office of Fair Trading exercises an independent jurisdiction. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has, however, written to the Chairman to draw attention to the public interest in maintaining a full and diverse national programme of racing.

Lottery Grants (Essex)

17. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what proportion of Lottery grants went to Essex in the last year for which figures are available. [145843]

Estelle Morris: Essex received 334 (or 1.6 per cent.) of the 20,314 Lottery grants awarded by the Lottery Distributing Bodies between 1 January 2003 and 23 December 2003.

These numbers are from information supplied by the Distributing Bodies.

Arts (Deprived Areas)

18. **Mr. Blizzard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on her policy regarding development of the arts as a means of regenerating deprived areas. [145844]

Estelle Morris: The arts have an important part to play in regenerating areas of urban and rural deprivation. My Department is currently examining evidence of the contribution of the arts to regeneration, and we will publish a policy statement in the spring.

British Film Industry

19. **Mr. Dhanda:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the support for the British film industry in the pre-Budget report. [145845]

Estelle Morris: The Chancellor's commitment to consider the extension of fiscal support for the film industry through the tax system is very good news for the industry. It reinforces this Government's commitment to the development of a flourishing and sustainable film industry which brings with it huge cultural and economic benefits for the UK. Over the next few months, DCMS will be working closely with the industry and with the Treasury to identify the best means of delivering the support.

Olympic Bid

20. **Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the latest state of preparation is for the Olympic bid in 2012; and if she will make a statement. [145846]

Tessa Jowell: The Olympic bid company, London 2012 Ltd., is making excellent progress, working closely with the Government, the Mayor of London and the British Olympic Association. The reply to the International Olympic Committee's Applicant Questionnaire, which is the first stage of the bidding process, will be delivered on 15 January.

Audio Description

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what targets she has set for the roll-out of audio description; [145578]

(2) if she will make a statement on the issues that prevent a faster roll-out of audio description. [145579]

Estelle Morris: The Communications Act 2003 sets audio description targets for broadcasters. 10 per cent. of non-excluded programmes are to be audio described for the blind and partially sighted by the tenth anniversary of the start of the service. The Act extends this requirement to digital cable and satellite broadcasters for the first time.

At present, the widespread availability of audio description modules needed to receive the service has been delayed owing to technical, manufacturing and distribution difficulties. However, we understand from discussions with manufacturers that receivers compatible with audio description on the digital terrestrial platform have recently come onto the market. We hope this will increase the take-up of the audio description service.

BBC

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will estimate the cost of the BBC Charter *(a)* review process and *(b)* public consultation. [145462]

Tessa Jowell: No estimate for the total cost for the BBC Charter review process is currently available. The final cost of the review will depend, among other factors, on the scale of the public's engagement with the process and on the issues that emerge from public consultation.

The cost of the first phase of public consultation, launched on 11 December, is estimated to be approximately £300,000 for the remainder of the financial year, excluding staff costs.

Departmental Expenditure

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much her Department spent on information literature, advertising and campaign material in each financial year since 2000–01. [145224]

Mr. Caborn: The Department's spend on information literature in each financial year since 2001–02 is detailed in the table.

	Spend (£000)
2000–01	538
2001–02	318
2002–03	393
2003–04	[1]494

[1] budgeted outturn

No advertising or publicity expenditure was incurred by the Department during this period.

Departmental Budget

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the total departmental budget was for each year since 1997; and what the projected figures are for the next five years. [145598]

Mr. Caborn: Information on the departmental budget for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport from 1998–99 to 2005–06 is published in Volume 1 of the Departmental Report 2003, (CM 5920). Copies were laid before Parliament on 15 May 2003. Updated figures will be published in the spring.

Departmental Gifts

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on gifts to foreign governments *(a)* in the last year and *(b)* since 1997. [145597]

Mr. Caborn: The following table shows departmental expenditure on gifts. A breakdown of gifts to foreign governments is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

£

Financial year	Expenditure
2003–04 to date	295.35
2002–03	452.26
2001–02	433.75
2000–01	904.84
1999–2000	2,660.96
1998–99	1,251.41
1997–98	227.79

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what percentage of staff employed within her Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145771]

Mr. Caborn: The percentage of staff currently employed over 55 years of age is 5.8 per cent. The number of staff recruited over the last 12 months over 55 years of age is 4 which represents 4.2 per cent. of staff recruited.

Departmental Travel

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on taxis for officials in each year since 1997. [145591]

Mr. Caborn: In DCMS travel and subsistence administration is contracted out and there is no electronic record maintained regarding mode of travel. To provide this information would involve a manual check of each travel and subsistence claim, which could only be undertaken at disproportionate costs.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on train tickets *(a)* in the last year and *(b)* since 1997. [145592]

Mr. Caborn: In DCMS travel and subsistence administration is contracted out and there is no electronic record maintained regarding mode of travel. To provide this information would involve a manual check of each travel and subsistence claim, which could be undertaken only at disproportionate cost.

Digital Television

Ross Cranston: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what information she has collated about the take-up of digital television broadcasting in *(a)* Dudley North, *(b)* the West Midlands and *(c)* England; and if she will make a statement. [143884]

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what percentage of households are converted to digital broken down by *(a)* ITV region and *(b)* constituency. [145507]

Estelle Morris: Take-up statistics are not presently collected for these areas. The ITC produces quarterly reports on take-up for the UK. Their most recent report stated that 45.5 per cent. of the UK had digital television as of 30 June 2003. OFCOM will now produce these reports.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many *(a)* analogue and *(b)* digital transmitters there are in the UK. [145504]

Estelle Morris: There are currently 1,154 analogue transmitters in the UK, 80 of which have been converted to receive digital signals.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the timescale is for achieving full analogue switch-off; and if she will make a statement. [145505]

Estelle Morris: The criteria set for switchover are that: everyone who can currently get the main public service broadcasting channels in analogue form must be able to receive them on digital systems; switching to digital is an affordable option for the vast majority of people; and as a target indicator of affordability, 95 per cent. of consumers must have access to digital equipment. The objective of the Digital Television Action Plan Project is to ensure these criteria are met so that we can, if we choose, take the decision to proceed to full switchover by ordering the switching off by 2010 of analogue terrestrial transmissions.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what progress has been made in the switchover to digital in the last five years. [145506]

Estelle Morris: Since digital television services were first launched in 1998, nearly 50 per cent. of households have switched at least one set to receive digital television broadcasts. The Government are working closely with broadcasters, manufacturers, retailers, consumer groups and other stakeholders through the Digital Television Action Plan to determine a firm timetable for digital switchover.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will estimate *(a)* the number of households that have access to digital television, *(b)* the total number of television sets in use and *(c)* the proportion of television sets in use that have access to digital services. [145508]

Estelle Morris: The information is as follows:

(a) The ITC produce quarterly reports on take-up for the UK. Their most recent report stated that 45.5 per cent. (11,286,961) of UK households had digital television as of 30 June 2003.

(b) The Household Technology Survey 2003, carried out for the ITC in spring 2003, estimated that there were 55.4 million televisions in use in UK homes.

(c) Indications are that around 30 per cent. of all televisions are converted to digital television, but no assessment has been made as to how many of those not yet converted are in use as a monitor (e.g. with a games console, VCR, DVD player) and not to receive broadcasts.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport which organisations have paid for the conversion of analogue transmitters; and how much each has spent in the last 10 years. [145509]

Estelle Morris: The transmission companies ntl and Crown Castle (who own the transmitter sites and provide transmission services to the broadcasters) have paid for the development of the current network of digital terrestrial transmitters around the UK. The digital multiplex operators (BBC, Digital 3 and 4, SDN and Crown Castle) pay these operators an annual fee for the use of these facilities. The exact amount paid both to develop the network and in broadcasters fees are commercially confidential.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many households have transferred from analogue to digital television in each of the last five years. [145510]

Estelle Morris: Figures for digital take-up are as follows:

	Digital households	*Source*
June 2003	11,286,961	ITC Multichannel Quarterly
December 2002	10,232,829	ITC Multichannel Quarterly
December 2001	9,256,326	[1]
December 2000	6,577,364	[1]
December 1999	2,722,000	[1]

[1] Figures up to December 2002 are estimates from information on subscriber figures from platform operators to give an indication of the take up figures of digital pay television for different platforms, and from sales of terrestrial non-subscription reception equipment.

Food Advertising

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what plans she has to change the current regulations on the advertising of food to children; [145573]

(2) upon what evidence the Government bases its view that the regulation of food advertising to children must be tightened. [145576]

Estelle Morris: The Department has no plans at present to change the rules on the advertising of food to children, but is taking part in the consultations being undertaken by the Food Standards Agency on the possible impact of broadcast advertising on childhood obesity. The Secretary of State has also asked OFCOM to review the adequacy of its codes regulating such advertising, in the light of the conclusions of the FSA Report, the Department of Health's Food and Health Action Plan and the Health Select Committee's inquiry into obesity. It is principally the responsibility of OFCOM to ensure that there is an appropriate code for the regulation of broadcast advertising and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State looks forward to the outcome of their work.

Football Broadcasting

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on football broadcasting rights and the role of the EU Commission. [145577]

Estelle Morris: The European Commission and the Premier League announced that they had agreed the terms of a settlement of the competition inquiry on 16 December. Although the detailed terms of this are yet to be finalised, the agreement is clearly very good news for English football.

One of the Government's primary concerns during the inquiry was the health of football at all levels. Substantial public funds are invested in the development of grass roots football in partnership with the Premier League. So although it was right that the Premier League made its own case to the Commission, the Government encouraged both parties to engage in constructive dialogue throughout the inquiry.

Government Car Service

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on the Government car service in the past year. [145605]

Mr. Caborn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply provided by the Chief Executive of the Government Car and Despatch Agency (Mr. Nick Matheson) to the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow) in May 2003. Copies of the letter were placed in the Libraries of the House.

Museums

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent representations she has received regarding the Government's museums policy. [145555]

Estelle Morris: I have received a wide range of representations, both from individuals and from key sectoral organisations, including the National Museums' Directors' Conference, the Museums Association and the Association of Independent Museums. There is strong support for the main planks of our policy: namely, free access to the National Museums and Galleries in London and the regions, the Renaissance programme for regional museums, and support for improved museum education services, particularly to children. The views received will make an important contribution to the Department's developing thinking during the 2004 Spending Review and thereafter.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what targets the Government have set to increase social inclusion through museum policy; [145556]

(2) what financial incentives are in place to encourage museums to increase the number of visitors from different sections of the community; [145558]

(3) what the Government's policy is on museums and social inclusion. [145559]

Estelle Morris: As set out in the publication "Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All" (PP 383 January 2001), our policy objective is that social inclusion should be a priority for all museums and galleries. To that end we have set two Public Service Agreement targets for the 2003–06 period: an 8 per cent. increase in adult C2DE visitors to the national museums and galleries; and 500,000 visits by new users, predominantly from social classes C2DE and ethnic minorities, to regional hub museums participating in the Renaissance in the Regions programme.

Renaissance in the Regions is the main funding programme specifically targeted at increasing the number of visitors from different parts of the community. Two of the programme's eight priority areas—reaching a wider community and improving access to knowledge and information—are particularly relevant. Funding for the programme is £60 million during the 2003–06 period. The grant in aid the Department provides to the national museums and galleries also supports the social inclusion activities they undertake.

From 1 April 2001, all National Museums and Galleries that are free have been able to recover input VAT on their expenditure associated with free access and those that charged previously have been compensated for their loss of admission income.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many museums have closed since 1997. [145560]

Estelle Morris: Since August 1997, 93 museums have been removed, on grounds of closure, from the museum registration scheme run by Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. During the same period 407 museums joined the registration scheme, of which 101 were newly founded. There are currently a total of 1,725 museums fully registered throughout the UK.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make an assessment of the impact on collections in museums of the Government's free admission policy. [145561]

Estelle Morris: Free admission together with investment in new galleries has enabled more people to see and appreciate the great collections of the national museums and visit them more frequently. Visits to the former charging museums rose from 9 million in 1998–99 to 15.3 million in 2002–03, an increase of 71 per cent. There is a good mix of new and repeat visitors. In consequence earned income from trading has held up well and was greater in 2002–03 than in 2001–02 before the introduction of full free admission. There is therefore no reason to suppose that free access has inhibited care of collections. All those museums that went free received year-on-year compensation for loss of admissions income.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make an assessment of the impact of the Government's free admissions policy on museums that are not included in the policy. [145562]

Estelle Morris: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the total Government funding to museums in real terms in each year since 1992. [145563]

Estelle Morris: Direct government funding to museums in England is shown in real terms in the following table from 1992–03 to 2005–06. It includes core funding of the National Museums as well as non-core support for regional museums as part of the Regional Renaissance programme.

	DCMS and MoD funding in real terms (£ million)[1,2,3]
1992–93	218.7
1993–94	214.4
1994–95	220.5
1995–96	215.4
1996–97	201.6
1997–98	188.6
1998–99	181.1
1999–2000	197.7
2000–01	203.7
2001–02	213.9
2002–03	230.6
2003–04	248.3
2004–05	254.0
2005–06	263.4
Total increase	43.6

[1] The figures exclude funding for the RAF museums at Hendon and Cosford.
[2] The figures exclude funds from DfES, the Arts Council of England and the National Lottery. DfES does not provide recurrent or direct funding to museums and galleries. Since 1999 DfES has provided approximately £6.8 million to support education work in museums and galleries through various project-funding programmes.
[3] The table does not include funding in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which is administered separately.

National Lottery

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent representations she has had from charities about *(a)* the funding they are able to generate and *(b)* the impact of the National Lottery on donations. [145564]

Estelle Morris: We have received no such representations. Charities have been significant beneficiaries of Lottery funding. Since 1995, the Community Fund has given £2.6 billion to more than 56,000 charities and community groups. This is in addition to the many charities which have benefited from grants from the other Lottery distributors.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much National Lottery funding has been distributed *(a)* in each constituency, *(b)* in each region and *(c)* to each good cause since 1997. [145565]

Estelle Morris: I am arranging for copies of the answer to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much revenue was generated by the National Lottery in each year since its launch; and what the projected figures are for the next five years. [145566]

Estelle Morris: Total revenue generated by the National Lottery in each year since its launch is as follows:

	£ million
1994–95	1,191
1995–96	5,217
1996–97	4,723
1997–98	5,514
1998–99	5,228
1999–2000	5,094
2000–01	4,983
2001–02	4,834
2002–03	4,574.5

For the current year and next five years we have advised distributing bodies to plan on an assumption of annual sales of £4.5 billion. But if London's bid for the 2012 Olympic games proves successful, Camelot plans to launch new Olympic Lottery games during 2005–6, which could raise the total value of ticket sales to about £4.7 billion per year, as an average for the five year period covered by the question.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much money has been distributed to good causes in each year since the launch of the National Lottery. [145567]

Estelle Morris: The information is shown in the following table.

The figures include income both from the operator and from investments.

Year	*£ Thousand Total*
2002–03	1,591,781
2001–02	1,842,233
2000–01	1,772,839
1999–2000	1,766,394
1998–99	1,918,906
1997–98	1,952,219
1996–97	1,587,759
1995–96	1,535,966
1994–95	298,580

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will set out her plans to give Lottery players more choice in determining where the money to good causes goes. [145568]

Estelle Morris: The Government made a commitment in the National Lottery Funding Decision Document to increase the public's involvement in decisions on Lottery spending. The Lottery distributors, in partnership with the National Lottery Promotions Unit and this Department, are already looking at ways to do this—for example, in relation to setting lottery funding themes and making local Lottery awards. The New Opportunities Fund and Community Fund are also developing new ways to consult people about local decisions which the new merged distributor will pioneer.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on her plans to merge the New Opportunities Fund and the Community Fund. [145569]

Estelle Morris: The National Lottery Funding Decision Document, published in July, outlined our plans to merge the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and the Community Fund to create a new Lottery distributor, to be responsible for distributing 50 per cent. of Lottery money to good causes.

There is significant overlap between NOF and the Community Fund and an opportunity in merging them to create a new, dynamic Lottery distributor, more responsive, more streamlined and better able to exploit opportunities for joining up funding streams. We want the new body to be more than sum of its parts, and we believe it will successfully be able to set the pace for modernising delivery of Lottery funding, making a real difference to the lives of disadvantaged people and communities.

The new body will continue funding for charities and the voluntary sector, and health, education and the environment, and will also assume the Millennium Commission's ability to fund large scale regenerative projects.

Establishing the new body will require primary legislation. We are encouraging NOF and the Community Fund to work as closely together as possible in the meantime to begin to exploit the synergies between the two bodies and to ensure that full merger can happen quickly when the legislation is in place.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to reform the National Lottery; and if she will make a statement on the timetable for the reforms. [145570]

Estelle Morris: The National Lottery Funding Decision Document, published July 2003, outlined our proposals for reforming the National Lottery. We intend to publish a summary of the consultation responses early in the New Year. The Department is working closely with the National Lottery Distributing Bodies and implementation of some of the reforms has already begun. Others will require legislation, which we would hope to bring forward over the next two years, subject to the availability of Parliamentary time.

Olympic Games

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if she will withdraw the departmental minute dated 2 December 2003, reporting contingent liabilities in the event of London winning the bid for the 2012 Olympic Games; [145521]

(2) if she will withdraw the policy of an unlimited funding commitment by the taxpayer to hosting the Olympic Games in the event that the cost exceeds £2.375 billion. [145522]

Tessa Jowell: No. It is normal practice, under Government Accounting rules, for Departments to report contingent liabilities to Parliament. As I made clear in my statement to the House on 15 May 2003, the Government have given their wholehearted support to the Olympic bid, not least because of the benefits which would accrue to the entire country were we to be successful.

Regional Tourist Boards

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much funding each regional tourist board in England has received from its regional development agency in each year since regional development agencies were established. [145264]

Mr. Caborn: We have contacted the regional development agencies to request the information required, and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available, placing copies of my letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

School Sport

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on sport in school; [145571]

(2) what targets the Government has set for the amount of time children participate in sport at school; [145581]

(3) what the average amount of time a child spent taking part in sport at school was in 2002–03 at key stage *(a)* 1, *(b)* 2 and *(c)* 3, broken down by (i) region, (ii) local education authority and (iii) constituency. [145582]

Mr. Caborn: The Government are investing more than £1 billion in England to transform PE and school sport. This funding will help deliver an ambitious Public Service Agreement target, shared by DCMS and DfES, to increase the percentage of school children who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high-quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum to 75 per cent. by 2006.

The information requested on participation rates is unavailable and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Data collected during the autumn term 2002 suggested that about a third of schools at Key Stages 1, 3 and 4 and two fifths of schools at Key Stage 2 offered their pupils two hours of high-quality PE and school sport each week within and beyond the curriculum. Data are now being collected for the first time—for publication in April 2004—on the number of pupils who choose to take up this entitlement.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many school playing fields were sold between 1992 and 1997. [145572]

Mr. Caborn: Statistics on applications for school playing field sales were not collected until our playing fields legislation came into force. Public concern about the loss of school playing fields led directly to the introduction in October 1998 of Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Before Section 77 was introduced, only grant-maintained schools were required to seek consent from the Secretary of State before selling land, including areas of their playing fields. Local authorities and other schools that owned their own playing fields were free to sell without restriction.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many school playing fields have been sold in each year since 1997. [145583]

Mr. Caborn: Data on the number of school playing fields sold is not collected. However, the Amendment to Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act in October 1998 has introduced powers that require all state schools to seek consent for the sale of playing fields from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. In addition, Sport England monitor the number of planning applications concerning playing fields in their role as statutory consultee.

The Government publish combined figures for *(a)* applications from schools submitted to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for the disposal or change of use of school playing fields (which are already published monthly), and *(b)* figures from Sport England giving details of planning applications affecting playing fields which have been referred to them as statutory consultee (which are already published quarterly), along with *(c)* relevant data from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

South West Arts

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the budget is for South West Arts for 2003–04; and what percentage is spent on administration. [145260]

Estelle Morris: The total budget for Arts Council England South West is £18,559,000 in 2003–04. The administration budget is £1,649,000. The percentage of the total budget spent on administration is therefore 8.9 per cent.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent assessment has been made of customer satisfaction with South West Arts; and if she will publish the results. [145261]

Estelle Morris: No official assessment of customer satisfaction has yet taken place in the South West. However, Arts Council England is commissioning a national customer satisfaction survey in January 2004. It is expected that interviews will take place in April to June and a report should be available in Autumn 2004.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many staff are employed by South West Arts. [145262]

Estelle Morris: 41 full time equivalent staff are currently employed by Arts Council England, South West.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful applicants for funding from South West Arts in each of the last five years. [145263]

Estelle Morris: I understand from the Arts Council that they could supply the information requested on grant-in-aid applications for Arts Council England, South West funding only at disproportionate cost. They have however provided the following table showing the number of applications for lottery funding in each of the last five years and spreadsheets detailing both successful and unsuccessful applications for 2003 which I will place in the Library of the House.

	1999	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
Accepted lottery applications	48	122	165	216	347
Rejected lottery applications	371	187	176	117	329

Tourism

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many visitors the United Kingdom received from abroad in the past five years, broken down by *(a)* continent and *(b)* country. [145587]

Mr. Caborn: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The table shows the number of visits the United Kingdom received from overseas residents in each of the past five years broken down by continent.

(b) Data are published in Travel Trends, and are available for 39 countries or groups of countries. Travel Trends may be obtained from the Library of the House and at: < http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Product.asp?vlnk = 1391 >

Number of visits by country of residence 1998 to 2002

(thousands)

	1998	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Total World	25,745	25,394	25,209	22,835	24,180
Europe	17,382	16,816	16,086	14,855	16,218
North America	4,553	4,599	4,869	4,227	4,271
Asia (including Middle East)	2,264	2,317	2,488	2,199	2,172
Australasia and Pacific	783	983	1,074	945	954
Africa	769	819	836	836	825
South and Central America and Caribbean	370	381	391	417	350

Source:
International Passenger Survey, National Statistics

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Post Offices

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much of the sum available to support post office branches in deprived areas of England has been allocated; which post offices have benefited; and by what amount. [144805]

Yvette Cooper: To date, £3.5 million of the £15 million Deprived Urban Post Office Fund has been allocated to Post Offices in the 10 per cent. most deprived wards in England. 81 Post offices at risk of closure have been supported by the fund so far, with an average grant of £43,000 going towards refurbishment, improving security, and expanding retail facilities.

Tenancy Deposit Scheme

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to include a statutory tenancy deposit scheme in the Bill on tenancy reform. [145274]

Keith Hill: Making provisions in a Bill on tenancy reform for the safeguarding of tenancy deposits is an option to which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are giving very serious consideration.

Decent Homes Standard

Judy Mallaber: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the impact will be on the resources available to Amber Valley Housing Ltd. to spend on housing stock, if the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October is upheld. [145466]

Diana Organ: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October upon the welfare of tenants occupying housing stock owned by Forest of Dean Housing; [145610]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October on Forest of Dean Housing's ability to achieve the 2010 Decent Homes Standard; [145611]

(3) what support the Government will give Forest of Dean Housing in its attempt to achieve 2010 Decent Homes Standard, following the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October. [145612]

Mr. Singh: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what effect the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October will have on Bradford's ability to achieve the 2010 Decent Homes Standard; [145338]

(2) how he estimates the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October, if upheld, will affect the welfare of tenants occupying premises of the Bradford and Northern Housing Association; [145339]

(3) how he estimates the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October will affect the state of housing in Bradford; [145340]

(4) how the Government will support Bradford in its attempt to achieve the 2010 Decent Homes Standard after the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October. [145342]

Keith Hill: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given on 15 December *Official Report*, columns 745W and 746W.

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) how he estimates the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October, if upheld, will affect tenants occupying premises of *(a)* Herefordshire Housing Ltd, *(b)* Haverbury Housing Partnership and *(c)* Hertfordshire Homes Ltd.; [144815]

(2) how the Government will support Maidstone and Bromsgrove in its bid to achieve the 2010 Decent Homes Standard if the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October is upheld and Maidstone's proposed transfer of houses to the Maidstone Housing Trust does not take place. [144816]

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what effect he estimates the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October will have on Crewe's ability to achieve the 2010 Decent Homes Standard; [144801]

(2) how he estimates the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October, if upheld, will affect Wulvern Housing Limited; [144802]

(3) how he estimates the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October will affect housing in Crewe. [144803]

Keith Hill: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 745–46W.

Council Housing

Jon Trickett: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what Wakefield Metropolitan District Council's capital receipts from the sale of council housing stock were in each year since 1997; and how much of these receipts was spent on council housing stock in each year. [146023]

Keith Hill: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 745W.

Departmental Policies (Regent's Park and Kensington, North)

Ms Buck: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the impact of his policies on the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington, North since 1997. [145420]

Mr. Raynsford: The information requested is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost, as such statistics are normally collected on the basis of administrative units (such as local authorities) rather than Parliamentary constituencies. The matter is further complicated as the constituency in question covers parts of two Local Authorities.

However, many of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's policies will have impacted significantly on the Regent's Park and Kensington, North constituency, including increased funding for local government, housing, neighbourhood renewal, and specific programmes to reduce rough sleeping and tackle social exclusion.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to amend regulations to allow the regular outgoings of a family with a disabled child to be taken into consideration by local authorities when they are determining the level of the family's contribution towards a disabled facilities grant to adapt the family home. [145523]

Keith Hill: The legislative provisions governing the Disabled Facilities Grant means test are set out in the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996. These are reviewed annually to reflect changes in the cost of living and other allowances taken into account in the test. The latest such review took effect last October through the Housing Renewal Grants (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is also reviewing the DFG programme, including the operation of the means test, in the context of the Spending Review 2004 and will announce its conclusions later this year.

Fenestration Self-assessment Scheme

Mr. Todd: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what steps he has taken to ensure that work completed by a Fenestration Self-Assessment Scheme registered company meets the same standards as work inspected by a local authority. [145976]

Phil Hope: All Fenestration Self-Assessment Scheme (FENSA) members are required to carry out all work in such a way that it complies with all relevant requirements of the Building Regulations, and FENSA monitors a sample of the work to ensure that this is so. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister recently commissioned a report which looked at how far FENSA achieved compliance with the Regulations and concluded that on the whole it was successful in doing this.

Homelessness

Simon Hughes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many families have claimed to be homeless in *(a)* London and *(b)* England in each year since 1997; and how many people were homeless in (i) London and (ii) England in each year since 1997. [140852]

Yvette Cooper: Information collected about local authorities' actions under homelessness legislation is in respect of households, rather than families or persons. Estimates of total decisions made on applications, and the number of these where a main homelessness duty was owed, in London and England are tabled as follows:

	Homelessness decisions		*Homelessness acceptances*	
	London	*England*	*London*	*England*
1997	54,540	242,340	24,370	102,000
1998	57,490	245,350	26,310	104,630
1999	59,700	243,290	28,380	105,370
2000	60,790	247,190	28,230	111,340
2001	63,420	256,390	31,370	118,610
2002	60,540	270,280	30,320	125,070

Notes:
1. Figures include estimates for missing data, and have been rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Acceptances refers to households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.
Source:
ODPM P1(E) quarterly housing activity returns.

A range of national and regional homelessness information—which includes estimates for non-responding local authorities—appears in a quarterly Statistical Release, available in the Libraries of the House and via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website. An accompanying Supplementary Table presents key data at regional and local authority level. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister website link is: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_604177.hcsp

Housing

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much the Government has invested in *(a)* council housing and *(b)* social housing schemes in (i) St. Helens, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) the north-west in each year since 1992. [144075]

Keith Hill: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table gives details of the Housing Investment Programme and the Approved Development Programme, from 1999 to date. The information from 1992–99 is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

£ million

	HIP	*ADP*	*Total*
1999–2000			
St. Helens	5.4	1	6.4
Merseyside	45.1	30.9	76
North West	216.7	70	286.7
2000–01			
St. Helens	8.01	1.2	9.21
Merseyside	69.7	28.9	98.6
North West	296.1	59.3	355.4
2001–02			
St. Helens	10.8	1.1	11.9
Merseyside	85.2	15.7	100.9
North West	347.3	0.05	347.35
2002–03			
St. Helens	10.5	0.56	11.1
Merseyside	89	26.7	115.7
North West	363	68.3	431.3
2003–04			
St. Helens	2.7	3.3	6
Merseyside	65	75.6	140.6
North West	323.5	68.3	391.8

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what arrangements he has put in place to ensure that local authorities in the process of developing empty property strategies to increase housing resources and aid regeneration take empty commercial buildings into account. [145298]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister considers that local authorities should take account of opportunities to convert redundant commercial property for housing use alongside their more traditional role of encouraging the re-use of vacant residential property. This is reflected in guidance we published earlier this year—Empty Property, Unlocking the Potential—which provides guidance to local authorities on establishing empty property strategies and covers a wide spectrum of property from empty homes to commercial property.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what arrangements he has put in place to ensure that local authorities are devoting adequate human resources to empty home strategies, with particular reference to the appointment of dedicated empty properties officers. [145299]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are ensuring that local authorities have adequate financial resources to provide decent local services without making excessive demands on local tax payers. For 2004–05 the Government will be providing total support to local authorities of £54.5 billion, an increase of 30 per cent. since 1997.

It is for local authorities to determine the level of resources, both human and financial, they devote to particular activities such as empty homes reduction strategies in line with local priorities.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to provide incentives for landlords to ensure that their properties remain occupied. [145300]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister plans to give local authorities discretionary powers to end the present council tax discount on long-term vacant dwellings, which will provide an incentive for owners to ensure their properties do not remain vacant for long periods of time.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has also introduced a range of fiscal incentives to encourage the reuse of vacant dwellings, in particular by reducing to 5 per cent. the rate at which VAT is charged on the renovation of dwellings vacant for 3 or more years.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what training the Government *(a)* has given and *(b)* is giving to local authorities to ensure that they are aware of the extent of their power to act as a financial institution in the housing market as provided by the Regulatory Reform Act 2002. [145296]

Keith Hill: Circular 05/2003, entitled 'Housing Renewal' and issued in June 2003 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister sets out the extent of local authorities new powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002 to provide financial assistance for the repair, improvement and adaptation of housing accommodation.

In relation to the provision of loan finance, the circular explains that local authorities and housing associations will be exempt from the Financial Services Authority regulatory regime on mortgage lending which will take effect from October 2004. However, local authorities and housing associations must still adhere to the underlying key principles of such mortgage regulation and The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, in consultation with the Housing Corporation and Local Government Association, is considering what further advice, guidance and training should be provided to them.

Identity Cards

Steve Webb: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the implications of the introduction of compulsory identity cards for his Department. [143984]

Yvette Cooper: The introduction of Identity Cards is a long-term undertaking upon which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is in discussion with the Home Office. However, as the scheme is still being developed it is too early to assess the implications for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Kirklees Council (Funding)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the total change in Government funding for Kirklees Council was in each year since 1997; how much of this total came from revenue from taxation; and how much was targeted on *(a)* regeneration projects, *(b)* specific grants for education, *(c)* social services and *(d)* direct funds for education not accounted for in the local education authority budget. [144714]

Mr. Raynsford: Tabled as follows are details of revenue grants received by Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council as part of gross Aggregate External Finance (AEF) between 1996–97 to 2004–05. This does not include the amount raised by the local authority through council tax. Most of the funding is paid as general grant and it is not therefore possible to provide a figure for the amount of this funding which was targeted on specific services. Funding for grants within AEF are paid through local authorities.

£000

	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05
Revenue Support Grant	132,598	131,230	142,727	144,857	141,631	150,052	144,256	177,435	199,354
National Non-Domestic Rates	90,026	84,653	88,507	96,074	108,810	106,625	117,363	113,867	108,809
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	—	—	—	—	—	1,496	2,244	2,992	2,992
Education Grants	3,670	4,130	5,713	8,158	15,760	30,843	29,397	27,219	[1]—
Personal Social Service Grants	4,471	3,244	3,460	3,970	5,405	9,258	14,987	12,158	[1]—
Supporting People	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6,727	[1]—

[1] Data not available until spring 2004 when it will be reported by local authorities on their RA and RA(SG) returns.

Notes:

1. The grants are on an unadjusted basis and may not be comparable between years, because transfers of function may have taken place.
2. Information on specific grants up until 2002–03 is taken from local authority outturn returns. From 2003–04, where outturn information is not yet available this is based on local authority budget returns.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether the number of people in receipt of disability living allowance and attendance allowance within a local authority area is taken into account in determining the amount of central Government block grant funding the local area receives. [145158]

Mr. Raynsford: The number of older people in receipt of disability living allowance and attendance allowance within a local authority area is one of the data indicators used in calculating the Social Services for Older People Formula Spending Share (FSS). An authority's total FSS is one of the major determinants in calculating the amount of Formula Grant for the authority.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what additional resources he is giving local authorities to meet the responsibilities he recently gave them. [145010]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government's proposals for the funding of local authority revenue spending in 2004–05 provide for an increase in Government grant of £3.6 billion, which is an increase of 7.1 per cent. over the current financial year on a like for like basis. Additional resources are provided to cover all new responsibilities when local authorities are required to meet.

Over the past seven years, local authorities have received a 30 per cent. real terms increase in grant from Government.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the procedures adopted to circulate the additional money to local councils announced in the pre-Budget Statement, with particular reference to the allocation to the Southend-on-Sea Unitary Authority. [145354]

Mr. Raynsford: The additional £340 million announced in the pre-Budget Statement was provided to help with the provision of children's services and liveability issues. It was therefore provided to those authorities that have responsibility for these services. This includes all unitary authorities such as Southend-on-Sea.

As announced on the 11 December 2003 the floor for authorities with education and social services responsibilities was raised from 3.5 per cent. to 4.0 per cent. and the ceiling from 5.8 per cent. to 7.5 per cent. For Shire districts, the floor was raised from 2.2 per cent. to 3.0 per cent.

Without the application of floors and ceilings, Southend-on-Sea would have received £125.829 million, a decrease of 0.5 per cent., before the pre-Budget Statement, and £126.993 million, an increase of 0.4 per cent., after the pre-Budget Statement. These increases are obviously below the floor. However in addition to the floors the Government also announced that no authority would receive a smaller grant increase than the increase in their schools FSS. This increased Southend-on-Sea's grant above the 4 per cent. floor to £131.519 million before the pre-Budget Statement. The £4,142 increase in grant received by Southend-on-Sea following the pre-Budget Statement was a consequence of the technical adjustment to the base position for floors and ceilings made for new capital investment.

Mr. Flook: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the extra amounts given to each local authority in the pre-Budget report; and what proportion of Government support already announced for 2004–05 this represents in each case. [145622]

Mr. Raynsford: A table showing the provisional distribution of the additional £340 million announced in the pre-Budget report was published on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website on 11 December 2003 (see http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/finance/0405/con2grntdiff.xls). For convenience a copy of this table is also available in the Libraries of the House.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list visits by Ministers in his Department since January 2002, broken down by *(a)* region and *(b)* county and unitary authority. [141897]

Yvette Cooper: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was established in May 2002. Since then Ministers have made the following visits on official business (the number of visits to each location is shown in brackets):

Bedfordshire, East of England (3)
Berkshire, South East (2)
Birmingham, West Midlands (37)
Blackpool, North West
Bournemouth, South West (2)
Bradford, Yorkshire and the Humber
Brighton and Hove, South East (4)
Bristol, South West (3)
Buckinghamshire, South East (5)
Cambridge, East
Cheshire, North West (3)
Cornwall, South West
County Durham, North East
Cumbria, North West (3)
Darlington, North East
Derby, East Midlands
Derbyshire, East Midlands (4)
Devon, South West (2)
Dorset, South West
Durham, North East (4)
East Sussex, South East
East Sussex, South East (2)
Essex, East
Essex, East of England (4)
Gloucestershire, South West (2)
Greater London, London (54)
Hertfordshire, East of England (6)
Kent, South East (13)
Kingston upon Hull, Yorkshire and the Humber (9)
Lancashire, North West (2)
Leicester, East Midlands (2)
Lincolnshire, East Midlands (2)
Liverpool, North West (5)
Manchester, North West (12)
Merseyside, North West (2)
Middlesborough, North East
Milton Keynes, South East (3)
Newcastle, North East (9)
Norfolk, East of England (3)
Northamptonshire, East Midlands (4)
Nottingham, East Midlands
Nottinghamshire, East Midlands (2)
Oxfordshire, South East (2)
Peterborough, East (4)
Plymouth, South West (2)
Portsmouth, South East
Shropshire, West Midlands (3)
South Yorkshire, Yorkshire and the Humber (7)
Southampton, South East (2)
Staffordshire, West Midlands (3)
Stoke on Trent, West Midlands
Suffolk, East
Surrey, South East (4)
Torbay, South West
Warrington, North West (4)
West Yorkshire, Yorkshire and the Humber (4)
York, Yorkshire and Humberside (3)

Mobile Phone Masts

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what reasons he has for allowing mobile phone masts to be erected on top of existing buildings without the need for planning permission; and if he will make a statement. [146056]

Keith Hill: Mobile phone masts up to and including 15 metres in height installed on a building are subject to the same rules on prior approval as ground based masts of the same height. Antennas of less than four metres in height that are attached directly to buildings are subject to permitted development rights.

Police Authority Precepts

Helen Jackson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister by how much in total police authority precepts have exceeded their grant increase over each of the past five years. [143970]

Mr. Raynsford: The amount by which the increase in police authority precepts has exceeded the increase in grant for the years 1998–99 to 2003–04 is tabled as follows:

	Amount by which increase in precepts exceeds grants to the nearest whole £ million
1998–99 to 1999–2000	-103
1999–2000 to 2000–01	-75
2000–01 to 2001–02	-127
2001–02 to 2002–03	109
2002–03 to 2003–04	129

This table includes all police authorities except the Metropolitan Police and the City of London. In each year, grants have been compared with previous years' grants on a like-for-like basis, taking into account adjustments for changes in function and funding.

The data for the years 1998–99 to 2002–03 are outturn data taken from the RS forms. The data for 2003–04 are budget data taken from the RA forms as outturn data are not yet available. These forms are completed each year by individual local authorities.

The grants included are Police Grant, redistributed business rates and Revenue Support Grant. Amounts received under the SSA Reduction Grant (Police Funding Review), and Central Support Protection Grant have also been included, where appropriate. In addition to the grants included in the table, police authorities also received a number of special and specific grants.

Regional Assemblies

Mr. Curry: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the cost was of establishing a website for the Elected Regional Assembly: Your Say campaign. [145987]

Mr. Raynsford: The Your Say website is part of the general Office of the Deputy Prime Minister website. The only cost of establishing the website was the use of a small amount of staff time.

Mr. Curry: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many copies of the information leaflet Elected Regional Assembly: "Your Say" have been *(a)* printed and *(b)* distributed in (i) Yorkshire and the Humber, (ii) the North West and (iii) the North East. [145988]

Mr. Raynsford: To date the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have so far printed and issued 6,200 "Your Say" leaflets for each of the three northern regions.

Mr. Curry: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what the total cost of expenditure has been on promoting regional assemblies in each year since May 2002; [146047]

(2) what the budget of the information campaign, Elected Regional Assembly: Your Say, is *(a)* in total, *(b)* for the North West, *(c)* for the North East and *(d)* for Yorkshire and the Humber. [146048]

Mr. Raynsford: The information campaign is designed to inform members of the public about elected regional assemblies and referendums. The costs of the launch are estimated at £25,000. These costs included accommodation, venue hire, refreshments and transport.

Material produced for the launch of the campaign, such as exhibition stands and leaflets will continue to be used throughout the information campaign in the three northern regions. The estimated total cost for the "information campaign" for this financial year are expected to be £500,000.

Relationship Managers

Mr. Brady: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which local authorities he is assessing for *(a)* the introduction of relationship managers and *(b)* transferring the control of their services to other councils; and what criteria he has used in making these assessments. [145229]

Mr. Raynsford: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has appointed lead officials to work with the 13 education and social services authorities rated "poor" under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) carried out by the Audit Commission in 2002; also with two authorities which were rated "weak" in 2002 but with poor corporate capacity to improve; and at present with one district council rated as "poor" in October 2003. These authorities are: Bedfordshire, Coventry, Hackney, Islington, Kingston-upon-Hull, Lambeth, North East Lincolnshire, North Tyneside, Oldham, Plymouth, Swindon, Torbay, Torridge, Wakefield, Walsall and Waltham Forest.

In addition, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has been working on a voluntary basis prior to CPA assessment with Chester-le-Street, Erewash and Rossendale district councils. Discussions are currently also under way with a number of authorities who were rated "weak" in 2002 with a view to working on a voluntary basis with them.

It is for the councils themselves to identify the key steps needed to achieve recovery through improvement. The role of lead officials is to monitor their rate of progress, and to provide advice to Ministers on whether that rate of progress is acceptable. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1999, the Government do have power to intervene in authorities which fail to comply with their duty of best value.

Wind Farms

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what planning guidelines apply to wind farms in areas of outstanding natural beauty. [145746]

Keith Hill: The current guidelines are set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 22: Renewable Energy (PPG22). Paragraphs 27 to 29 of the PPG set out the guidelines for assessing development proposals relating to all renewable energy projects in National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Broads and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. A draft revised Planning Policy Statement 22, which will replace the existing PPG22, was issued for three months consultation on 5 November.

TREASURY

Consumer Spending

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much consumer spending has increased, in real terms, in each quarter since 1997. [146129]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Mike Hughes to Mr. Stephen O'Brien dated 5 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on the amount by which consumer spending has increased, in real terms, in each quarter since 1997 [146129]. I am replying in his absence.

Consumer spending is described as "household final consumption expenditure" in the UK National Accounts (series identifier ABJR). The following table shows the seasonally adjusted quarter-on-quarter growth of this series in volume.

Household final consumption expenditure[1]: quarter-on-quarter growth (%) in volume terms, 1997–2003—United Kingdom

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Quarter 1	0.4	1.0	1.7	2.0	1.3	0.1	-0.2
Quarter 2	1.6	0.9	1.0	0.2	0.4	1.1	0.8
Quarter 3	0.1	0.9	0.7	0.6	1.6	0.5	0.9
Quarter 4	1.4	0.8	1.8	0.0	1.4	1.0	

[1] Seasonally adjusted

Government Employees

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the working population in each region of the UK is government employees. [145116]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. George Osborne, dated 5 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about government employees in the UK. (145116)

Information from administrative returns shows that, in 2002, 2.8% of employee jobs in the UK were in central government. No statistics from this source are available by region.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) does provide regional statistics for the proportions of employed people who classify themselves as working in central government or the Civil Service. These figures are based on respondents' own assessments and are not necessarily consistent with the official classification of the organisations they work for. However, for the UK as a whole, the most recent LFS data for the three months ending August 2003, shows 2.9% of people in employment working in central government, very close to the figure from the administrative returns.

The attached table shows the LFS statistics by region.

Percentages of employment in central Government and the Civil Service by region

Three months ending August 2003[1]

Government office region of residence	*Percentage*
East Midlands	2.1
Eastern	2.3
London	3.3
North East	3.5
North West	3.0
Northern Ireland	6.4
Scotland	3.5
South East	2.7
South West	2.7
Wales	3.5
West Midlands	1.8
Yorkshire and Humberside	3.0
United Kingdom	2.9

[1] Percentage, no seasonally adjusted.

Source:
Labour Force Survey

Tonnage Tax

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies have been rejected for entry into the tonnage tax scheme in each year since the system was introduced; and how many of these were operating under *(a)* the red ensign and *(b)* other flags. [145285]

Dawn Primarolo: No company has had an election for tonnage tax rejected.

Companies can discuss their eligibility for the regime in advance with the Inland Revenue. Where such discussions take place, a company will sometimes decide not to make an election.

Unemployment (Lone Parents)

Bob Spink: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many lone parent workless households there were in each of the last three years; [145290]

(2) how many children in workless households there were in each of the last three years. [145291]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Bob Spink, dated 5 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about lone parent workless households and children in workless households. (145290, 145291)

The attached table gives the information requested. These estimates are from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), for the three month period ending May of each year from 2001 to 2003.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to sampling error.

Workless lone parent households and children living in workless households[1]; United Kingdom

Thousands, not seasonally adjusted

	Workless lone parent households with dependent children[2]	*Children living in workless households[3]*
Spring 2001	684	1,830
Spring 2002	703	1,889
Spring 2003	697	1,796

[1] Households with at least one person of working age where no one is in employment. Figures have been adjusted to include estimates for households with unknown economic activity.
[2] Children under 16 and those aged 16–18 in full-time education.
[3] Children under 16.
Note:
These LFS estimates have not been adjusted to reflect the2001 Census results.
Source:
ONS Labour Force Survey

Agricultural Employment

Mr. Ruffley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were employed in the agriculture sector in *(a)* Suffolk, *(b)* Norfolk, *(c)* Cambridgeshire, *(d)* Essex and *(e)* England in each year since 1997. [143530]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

Figures for the agricultural labour force (paid and unpaid) are collected annually from the June Agricultural Census. They include managerial and office work on the holding, the preparation and marketing of produce and maintenance but exclude gardeners, groundsmen, gamekeepers, grooms, farm shop workers, sales assistants in garden centres, domestic staff in the farmhouse and schoolchildren.

Total agricultural labour force

Thousands

	1997	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
(a) Suffolk	11.8	12.2	11.2	11.2	11.6	10.8
(b) Norfolk	17.0	17.5	16.1	15.9	16.4	15.9
(c) Cambridge (including Peterborough)	9.7	9.8	9.2	9.1	9.3	9.2
(d) Essex (including Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea	11.4	11.6	10.9	10.6	10.8	10.4
(e) England	393.1	396.6	379.0	374.3	386.9	371.6

Notes:
1. Figures prior to 2000 relate to main holdings only. From 2000 onwards data for all holdings are included.
2. Due to a register improvement exercise in 2001 labour figures prior to this are not directly comparable with later results.
Source:
June Agricultural Census

Decent Homes Standard

Judy Mallaber: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to compensate Amber Valley Housing Ltd. for the loss of funds resulting from the Inland Revenue ruling of 24 October 2003 to enable them to fulfil their business plan. [145465]

Dawn Primarolo: On 24 October 2003, the Inland Revenue gave its preliminary view on the tax implications of contracts developed by a major accountancy firm. Discussions are continuing.

Mr. Singh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the Government will compensate Bradford for the loss of funds available to the Bradford and Northern Housing Association that will result from the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October 2003. [145341]

Dawn Primarolo: On 24 October 2003, the Inland Revenue gave its preliminary view on the tax implications of contracts developed by a major accountancy firm. Discussions are continuing.

Diana Organ: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Government will take to compensate Forest of Dean Housing for the loss of funds arising from the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October 2003. [145607]

Dawn Primarolo: On 24 October 2003, the Inland Revenue gave its preliminary view on the tax implications of contracts developed by a major accountancy firm. Discussions are continuing.

Average Income

Andrew George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the average income was in the *(a)* 50 most deprived and *(b)* 50 most affluent wards in England in the last year for which figures are available; and what estimate he has made of the percentage of that income which was spent on food. [145980]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Mike Pepper to Mr. Andrew George, dated 5 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your parliamentary question on income, and proportion of income spent on food, in deprived and affluent wards [145980]. I am replying in his absence.

The Expenditure and Food Survey is the only data source that provides consistent information on both income and expenditure (report available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vink=361). This is a sample survey covering about 7,500 households in the UK. However, given the limitations of the sample size and the survey design, results from the survey are not published below regional level. Ward level information is not available.

Budget (Responses)

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many responses his Department received to the *(a)* Budget 2002 summary leaflets and *(b)* leaflets summarising the 2002 pre-Budget report. [145326]

Ruth Kelly: The Treasury receives a large number of responses to its Budget and Pre-Budget Report documentation, not only from the public using the freepost service with the Pre-Budget Report leaflet, but also through letters, e-mails and telephone calls to the Treasury's Public Enquiry Unit.

Carers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reward people for caring for older relatives. [145109]

Dawn Primarolo: This Government formally recognises the contribution of carers through the National Carers' Strategy ('Caring for Carers') published in 1999. In acknowledgement of their valuable role the Government have instigated a number of measures to ensure financial support for carers, in particular at helping older and poorer carers, those on low income, and those carers who wish to combine caring with employment, including:

the upper age limit to claiming Carer's Allowance was abolished, allowing carers aged 65 and above access to the benefit for the first time;

carers may also qualify for extra help within income related benefits. The amount has increased from £14.15 in March 2001 to £25.10 in April 2003, and helps over 250,000 carers; and

the earnings limit has been increased substantially and is currently £77 a week after allowable expenses.

Carers can now claim Carer's Allowance online using the DWP easy step-by-step electronic claim form.

The Government recently introduced the Pension Credit, which provides a guaranteed minimum income for all people aged 60 and over. Under the Pension Credit additional amounts are included for carers. Those entitled to Carer's Allowance or treated as satisfying the qualifying conditions for the award may benefit from the additional amount.

People receiving Carer's Allowance are credited with National Insurance contributions each week, which protect their future entitlement to benefits such as State Pension and Incapacity Benefit. They also get extra help through the Government's State Second Pension.

Child Tax Credit

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children were eligible for child tax credit in *(a)* St. Helens and *(b)* Merseyside in (i) 2001, (ii) 2002 and (iii) 2003. [145151]

Dawn Primarolo: Child tax credit was introduced in April 2003. Estimates, based on a sample of cases, of the numbers receiving child tax credit in each local authority and constituency at July 2003 are shown in "Child and Working Tax Credit Statistics. Geographical analyses." This document can be found on the Inland Revenue website, at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/menu.htm No estimates are available of the number of families eligible in each constituency or local authority.

Child Trust Funds

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will offer incentives for contributions to child trust funds for those in receipt of child tax credit. [145698]

Ruth Kelly: The child trust fund will benefit all children while making sure that most help goes to those who need it most.

The Government endowments are a powerful incentive for a child's family to save. All eligible children will receive a Government endowment of £250. Children in households with a finalised claim to child tax credit (CTC) and income below the CTC threshold, currently £13,230, will receive an additional Government endowment of £250, making £500 in total. The Government will make further payments into accounts when children turn seven, and again, there will be an additional payment for the poorest children.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will establish a website dedicated to providing financial education for *(a)* children and *(b)* parents on child trust funds. [145699]

Ruth Kelly: The Inland Revenue is developing a dedicated website to provide a one-stop shop for information on the Child Trust Fund (CTF). It will include resources for a variety of audiences including parents, family members, children and teachers.

The Government will also work with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to include the CTF in their consumer information activity. This will include incorporating the CTF into the FSA consumer website.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which parent will have legal responsibility for their child's trust fund should they divorce. [145701]

Ruth Kelly: The situation for the CTF will be a matter of general law.

When a married couple separates or divorces, both parents retain parental responsibility. They are required to make an arrangement at the time of the divorce or separation specifying the arrangements for the child, which in practice, covers matters like living arrangements and contact arrangements, but would be encouraged to seek advice and agreement on other issues which could include the child's Child Trust Fund.

The general law reflects the principle that parents should not be regarded as losing their position and ability to take decisions about their children, simply because they are in dispute with one another about a particular matter.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what scoping exercise his Department has conducted to assess the likely contributions those on low incomes will make to child trust funds. [145702]

Ruth Kelly: We have asked Deloitte, an independent consultancy, to carry out detailed quantitative and qualitative research on the impact of different charge cap structures on the Child Trust Fund (CTF) market. This research includes analysis of likely contributions into CTF accounts.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will happen to contributions and interest payments made to a Child Trust Fund while the Inland Revenue is considering whether or not a child is eligible for the topped-up endowment. [145703]

Ruth Kelly: The Government will pay an initial endowment of £250 into every eligible child's CTF account soon after it is opened. Children in families receiving child tax credit (CTC) and with a household income below the CTC threshold (currently £13,230) will receive an additional £250. This will be added to the CTF account once the CTC award for that year is confirmed.

Any contributions made into the CTF account or interest arising on the funds in that account in the period between payment of the initial Government endowment and the additional endowment will remain in the CTF account and no tax charge will arise on any income and gains.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will allow investment companies to charge a basic administration fee for Child Trust Funds which would be topped-up by a performance-related administration fee. [145704]

Ruth Kelly: Draft regulations setting out the charges for Child Trust Fund accounts will be published during the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether parents under 18 will be able to make decisions on trust funds for their children. [145705]

Ruth Kelly: In England Wales and Northern Ireland where a parent under the age of 18 has a child who is eligible for a CTF account it will not be possible for that parent to manage their child's CTF account. This is because although parents have parental responsibility for their children under the Children Act 1989 they do not have the legal capacity to enter into binding contracts to purchase equities.

As a result they are not able to make decisions about CTF accounts. In these circumstances the Inland Revenue will open a stakeholder account CTF account on behalf of the child. Once the parent reaches the age of 18, they will be able to assume responsibility for managing their child's CTF account.

The situation is different in Scotland where 16 year olds are entitled to make their own decisions about their property, including CTF accounts. This means that a parent aged between 16 and 18 in Scotland will be able to manage their child's CTF account.

Council Tax

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the average council tax was *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of rebates as a percentage of equivalised disposable income in each income quintile for (i) pensioner households and (ii) non-pensioner households in 1997–98. [146086]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Dr. Mike Pepper to Mr. David Willetts dated 5 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question on the average gross and net council tax as a percentage of equivalised disposable income in each income quintile for (i) pensioner households and (ii) non-pensioner households in 1997–98 [146086]. I am replying in his absence.

Estimates for council taxes are based on the analysis "The effects of taxes and benefits on household income 2001–02" produced by the ONS and published on the National Statistics website on October 21st 2003. The analysis can be obtained from the House of Commons Library or from the National Statistics website at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/taxesbenefits. It includes measures of income inequality for the United Kingdom as a whole based on data from the Expenditure and Food Survey. This is a sample survey covering about 7,500 households in the UK and sample sizes are only sufficient to give approximate estimates for pensioner households.

Pensioner households have been defined as those where the Head of Household is retired or unoccupied and aged 65 or more and male, or 60 years of age or more and female, and economically inactive. Answers to other recent parliamentary questions about council tax broken down by household type, relating to 2001–02, have used the definition of the Household Reference Person rather than the Head of Household. Detailed information on the definition of these identifiers can be found on the National Statistics website.

Council tax is not paid in Northern Ireland. Estimates for 1997–98 for Great Britain are shown in the following table for gross and net council tax as a percentage of disposable income for all pensioner households (single and couples) and non pensioner households, and for all households. Equivalised income has been used to divide households into quintiles. However, the estimates of Council tax as a percentage of income use unequivalised rather than equivalised income (i.e. without the adjustment for household size). Equivalisation is a standard methodology that takes into account the size and composition of households and adjusts their incomes to recognise differing demands on resources. It is used for ranking households in particular. It is more usual to analyse unequivalised income in relation to expenditure items (which are unequivalised) such as Council tax. However, if the same equivalisation factors were applied to income and expenditure, the factors would cancel each other out and the percentages would remain the same.

Council tax as a percentage of disposable income for pensioner[1] and non-pensioner households, 1997–98—Great Britain[2]

	Quintile groups of all households ranked by equivalised disposable income					
Households	*Bottom*	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*	*Top*	*All households*
Quintile points[3] (equivalised disposable income, £ per year)						
Pensioner	7,701	9,503	11,707	15,393		
Non-pensioner	9,177	13,623	18,449	25,508		
All households	8,504	11,922	16,342	23,457		
Gross council tax as a percentage unequivalised disposable of income						
Pensioner	9.4	7.0	5.8	4.5	3.4	5.1
Non-pensioner	6.0	3.7	2.9	2.3	1.7	2.6
All households	6.8	4.7	3.2	2.6	1.8	2.9

Council tax as a percentage of disposable income for pensioner[1] and non-pensioner households, 1997–98—Great Britain[2]

Households	Quintile groups of all households ranked by equivalised disposable income: Bottom	2nd	3rd	4th	Top	All households
Net council tax[4] as a percentage of unequivalised disposable income						
Pensioner	5.8	4.4	4.2	3.4	3.1	3.8
Non-pensioner	3.0	3.0	2.7	2.3	1.7	2.3
All households	3.5	3.3	2.9	2.5	1.8	2.4

[1] Household reference person is economically inactive and over minimum state pension age.
[2] Council tax is not paid in Northern Ireland
[3] Equivalised disposable income at the boundary point between two quintile groups.
[4] Net council taxes after deducting benefits and discounts.
Source:
Office for National Statistics, based on the analysis 'The effects of taxes and benefits on household income,' published on the National Statistics website

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the *(a)* average equivalised disposable income and *(b)* gross council tax in money terms was for each income quintile in 2001–02; and if he will make a statement. [146153]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Mike Pepper to Mr. David Willetts, dated 5 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question asking for average equivalised disposable income and gross council tax for each income quintile group in 2001–02 [146153]. I am replying in his absence.

Estimates in the following table are produced from the Office for National Statistics' analysis "The effects of taxes and benefits on household income" published on the National Statistics website on October 21st 2003 at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/taxesbenefits. The analysis includes measures of income inequality for the United Kingdom as a whole based on data from the Expenditure and Food Survey. This is a sample survey covering about 7,500 households in the UK and sample sizes are only sufficient to give approximate estimates. In particular, results for the lowest quintile are less reliable than for others because of greater variability and because it includes households with members in a state of occupational transition.

The table shows for 2001–02, the average disposable income and average gross council tax paid by all households in Great Britain and for each income quintile group where households are ranked by equivalised disposable income. Although equivalised income has been used to divide households into quintiles, the estimates of average disposable income and average gross council tax are unequivalised. Equivalisation is a standard methodology that takes into account the size and composition of households and adjusts their incomes to recognise differing demands on resources, and is used for ranking households in particular. However, it is more usual to analyse unequivalised income in relation to an expenditure item such as Council tax which is not equivalised.

Average disposable income and gross council tax (£ pa) by equivalised disposable income quintile, 2001–02—Great Britain[1]

Quintile	Income boundary[2]	Average unequivalised disposable income	Average gross council tax
Bottom		7,829	647
	10,397		
2nd		12,720	652
	14,717		
3rd		18,992	721
	20,042		
4th		26,915	789
	28,596		
Top		48,124	895
All households		23,011	741

[1] Council tax is not paid in Northern Ireland
[2] Boundary point between equivalised disposable income quintiles
Source:
Office for National Statistics, based on the analysis 'The effects of taxes and benefits on household income', published on the ONS website.

Debt Interest

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his estimate is of the level of central government gross debt interest in *(a)* 2006–07 and *(b)* 2008–09 derived from the projections for public sector net debt up to 2008–09 in Table B5 of the 2003 pre-Budget report. [145179]

Mr. Boateng: PBR projections for public expenditure after the end of the 2002 Spending Review period are based on assumptions about overall growth rates, as set out in paragraph B27 of the pre-Budget report, rather than on forecasts of individual spending components. Therefore no forecasts of debt interest after 2005–06 are available.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the size of the increment in central Government gross debt interest from 2004–05 to 2005–06 relative to the size of the increments for the years *(a)* 2002–03 to 2003–04 and *(b)* 2003–04 to 2004–05. [145186]

Mr. Boateng: Estimates of central Government gross debt interest depend on a combination of factors. In the PBR projection there is a large increase between 2002–03 and 2003–04, mainly due to higher RPI inflation in 2003–04, and between 2003–04 and 2004–05, mainly due to assumed interest rates, based on market expectations, which are much higher in 2004–05, and a larger rise in the RPI. The increase in debt interest between 2004–05 and 2005–06 is smaller because assumed interest rates rise by less than in the previous year and RPI inflation is lower.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the size of the increment in central Government gross debt interest between 2004–05 and 2005–06 indicated in the pre-Budget report 2003 relative to that indicated in Budget 2003. [145187]

Mr. Boateng: Changes to estimates of central Government debt interest payments since the Budget reflect the revision of projections of a number of factors, as outlined in paragraph B73 of the pre-Budget report.

Departmental Advertising

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising was for his Department for each year since 1997. [145330]

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total expenditure on *(a)* information campaigns and *(b)* advertising was for his Department in each year since 1997. [145708]

Ruth Kelly: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 19 November 2003 *Official Report*, column 1093W.

Domestic Business Tax Allowance

Dr. Iddon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many respondents to the recent Treasury consultation on economic instruments to improve household energy efficiency supported domestic business tax allowance. [145423]

John Healey: The Government have published a summary of consultation responses, which is available from the Treasury website. This summary explains that the Government received 126 responses to the consultation, of which 72 supported a domestic business tax allowance.

Employment (Older People)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how his pre-Budget report plans for full employment will help older people who wish to remain in the labour market. [145129]

John Healey: The 2003 pre-Budget report plans for full employment will help ensure that older workers are given the choice and opportunity to continue working beyond their normal retirement age. Details of these measures are contained in paragraphs 4.31, 5.53 and 5.62 of the pre-Budget report [Cm 6042].

Financial Products (Mis-selling)

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources he is allocating to increase adult financial literacy so that parents of children with child trust funds can make informed decisions about investments for their children. [145711]

Ruth Kelly: We are working with the FSA and key players in adult literacy from Government and the voluntary sector to identify the needs of parents in relation to managing the Child Trust Fund and the best ways of meeting them.

We will continue to work very closely with the FSA and others, like the Personal Finance Education Group (PFEG), to improve financial literacy standards among the population. I am on the Financial Capability Steering Group led by the FSA.

Research has been carried out into the communication needs of parents whose children are eligible for the Child Trust Fund, particularly those of parents who have little or no experience of saving. The findings will inform the information pack that will be sent out with the CTF voucher and a website on the CTF.

This work will develop over 2004 and involve financial providers and community groups too. We expect a range of explanatory materials to be developed to help families make informed decisions about their Child Trust Funds.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about using the child trust fund to improve financial literacy for children and teenagers. [145713]

Ruth Kelly: I am the Minister responsible for the Child Trust Fund and my officials work very closely with the Department for Education and Skills and others involved in delivering financial capability for young people. I also refer my hon. Friend to the answer I am today giving to his question 145719.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources will be available to teachers to increase their financial literacy so they are able to inform their pupils about child trust funds. [145719]

Ruth Kelly: We have already committed to commissioning the development of a range of Child Trust Fund (CTF) teaching and learning resources. The Inland Revenue will also work closely with the Department for Education and Skills, devolved administrations, FSA and other organisations to assess what additional support will help children engage with their CTF. This could include joint work to consider the professional development needs of teachers teaching personal finance topics and issuing updated guidance on teaching personal finance incorporating the CTF.

A key point of contact will be a website dedicated to the CTF. It will be developed initially to meet the information and guidance needs of parents, then increasingly over time those of teachers and children.

Ensuring teachers are properly equipped to deliver financial capability is important. We await with interest the outcome of work that has been undertaken independently by the Personal Finance Education Group into these issues, which is due to report in the new year.

Gershon Review

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Gershon Review is expected to report. [145946]

Mr. Boateng: The Efficiency Review led by Sir Peter Gershon is expected to report around the time the Spending Review is announced.

Gift Aid

Tim Loughton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for (1) what reason he proposes to end gift aid tax relief on admission charges to charity venues; [144987]

(2) what discussions he has had with heritage and conservation charities about the ending of gift aid tax relief on admission charges; [144988]

(3) what his estimate is of the cost to charities of the ending of gift aid tax relief on admission charges; [144989]

(4) if he will list those charities which will be affected by the ending of gift aid tax relief on admission charges; [144990]

(5) how much money has been rebated to charities as a result of gift aid tax relief on admission charges since its inception. [144991]

John Healey: Many heritage and conservation charities benefit from a special exemption which means they can offer free admission to donors, without that admission being regarded as a benefit under Gift Aid rules. This was originally introduced in 1989 and applied to deed of covenant arrangements. Since the change to Gift Aid in April 2000 an increasing number of heritage and conservation charities are granting free admission in return for a donation equal to the entrance fee. Charities are able to claim Gift Aid on such donations. This is an undesirable and unintended side effect of the Gift Aid legislation. It is unfair for some charities to be able to reclaim Gift Aid whilst others cannot.

The amendments to the legislation will ensure that the special exemption for certain heritage and conservation charities applies as it was originally intended and not to "day memberships" of this kind.

The Government will be consulting closely with charities which might be affected, through their associations and representative bodies, on the detail of how the change may be best achieved.

Information on the amount repaid in relation to admission charges is not available, as there is no mechanism within Gift Aid to distinguish amounts repaid to charities according to the type of the donation. For this reason there are no estimates available of the cost to charities of the ending of the relief on admission charges.

Information about individual organisations claiming Gift Aid is not available; Exemption 15 (Statutory and other restrictions) of the Open Government Code applies.

Hoechst Judgment

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the amount of tax likely to be repaid as a consequence of the European Court of Justice judgment in the Hoechst case; and how much has been repaid to date. [145732]

Dawn Primarolo: A total of £183 million has been paid to date as a consequence of the judgment of the European Court of Justice in the Hoechst case. Around £100 million of this may be recoverable depending on the outcome of a related court case. Current claims in which repayments have not yet been made are estimated to be in the region of £250 million, of which around £150 million depends on the court case. Any further repayments are subject to the other court decisions and a reliable estimate of the tax potentially repayable is not possible at the present time.

Israel

Richard Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the types of products that have been imported to the UK under preference according to the EU-Israel Association Agreement but which HM Customs and Excise has reason to believe have originated in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. [145398]

John Healey: The information requested could lead to the identification of individual importers, so the information cannot be made available; Exemption 13 (third party's commercial confidences) and 15 (statutory and other restrictions) of the Code of Conduct on Access to Government Information apply.

IT Systems

Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what Inland Revenue information technology systems are being privatised; and for what reasons. [145813]

Dawn Primarolo: No Inland Revenue IT systems are being privatised.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas

Mr. Drew: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the duty regime for liquefied petroleum gas for motor vehicles following his pre-Budget statement. [144880]

John Healey: The 2003 pre-Budget report (Cm 6042) announced that the current duty rate for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) would be gradually increased over time towards a level that is more commensurate with its environmental benefit.

Consistent with the PBR commitment to provide unprecedented rolling three-year certainty on duty rates for all alternative fuels, the duty differentials for LPG for the next three years will be set out in Budget 2004.

National Statistics

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that for every National Statistics first release, the full list of Ministers and officials having pre-release access to the release or the associated briefing is made available, including *(a)* an electronic link for electronic versions of the release and *(b)* the length of pre-release access. [143375]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 18 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 728W.

The list of Treasury Ministers and officials who have authorised pre-release access to National Statistics first releases is available on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website. In addition, the Macroeconomic Statistics Service Level Agreement, drawn up between ONS and the Treasury in 1998, lists a further small

number of individuals in the Treasury who receive copies of the Treasury's internal briefing on these statistical releases before the publication of the data. Since 1998, this list has been updated to reflect changes to personnel and staff structures.

An updated list of those with authorised access to briefing in line with these procedures will be made available in due course.

Overseas Companies

Nick Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what precedent there is for the UK Government purchasing an overseas company; and if he will make a statement. [144114]

Mr. Boateng: From time to time, the Boards of state-owned enterprises take commercial decisions involving overseas investments. These decisions are a matter for those Boards under their governance arrangements with the responsible shareholding departments.

Private Finance Initiative/ Public Private Partnerships Contracts

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the value of capital expenditure payments made under private finance initiative/public private partnerships contracts in each year since 1997; [145471]

(2) whether the projected payments under private finance initiative contracts shown in Table C20 of Budget 2003, HC 500, comprise *(a)* capital expenditure and *(b)* other payments; and if he will state what these payment are. [145482]

Mr. Boateng: Table C20 of the Budget shows a forecast of the estimated unitary payments under signed PFI contracts over the next 25 years. PFI: Meeting the Investment Challenge paragraph 2.23 sets out what these payments comprise.

Table C18 of the Budget lists departmental estimates of capital expenditure by the private sector under signed PFI/PPP contracts. Since 1997 these estimates are:

£ billion

	Value
1997–98	1.5
1998–99	3.5
1999–2000	2.7
2000–01	3.2
2001–02	3.5
2002–03	3.7

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will state the nature of the element of private finance initiative contracts that is stated when these contracts are shown on balance sheet; [145479]

(2) what the total value is of *(a)* all private finance initiative contracts to maturity and *(b)* private finance initiative contracts shown on balance sheet; and what proportion of the total value is on balance sheet; [145480]

(3) if he will list the *(a)* private finance initiative contracts, *(b)* on-balance sheet private finance initiative contracts and *(c)* off-balance sheet private finance initiative contracts; and what proportion of private finance initiative contracts are on balance sheet. [145481]

Mr. Boateng: Where the assets constructed under PFI contracts are reported on departmental balance sheets, the value reported is the full value of the assets concerned in accordance with the requirements of the Accounting Standards Board's Application Note F to FRS 5—Private Finance Initiative and Similar Contracts.

A total of 563 PFI transactions reached financial close by 4 April 2003, with a total capital value of £35.5 billion. The estimated capital value of signed PFI contracts where capital assets are accounted for on departmental balance sheets is £20.2 billion. This represents 57 per cent. of the total estimated capital value.

A list of PFI contracts signed to date is available on the HM Treasury public website. PFI contracts where the assets concerned are on departmental balance sheets are reported in departmental accounts, together with disclosure of information relating to any contracts assessed as off balance sheet.

Pre-Budget Report 2003

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on his plans to look at the policy, funding and regulation activity which impacts on the private sector, referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003; [145922]

(2) if he will make a statement on his plans to look at the way in which *(a)* policy is set for, *(b)* funding provided to and *(c)* quality regulated in front line public service delivery organisations, referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003. [145943]

Mr. Boateng: Departments have been asked to bring forward proposals in this area in their Spending Review submissions.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his plans to seek to ensure significant improvements in the productive time of front line public service professionals by realising benefits from investments agreed in the 2002 Spending Review, referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003. [145935]

Mr. Boateng: This is a matter which will be considered in light of the Efficiency Review's further work and report later in the year.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what deadline he has set for the significant improvements in the productive time of front line public service professionals referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget Report 2003. [145948]

Mr. Boateng: A decision on whether, how and at what level any targets for improvements in productive time should be set will be taken in light of the Efficiency Review's report later this year.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he will measure the significant improvements in the productive time of front line public service professionals referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget Report 2003. [145949]

Mr. Boateng: This is a matter on which the Efficiency Review will report later in the year.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to set targets for the significant improvements in the productive time of front line public service professionals referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget Report 2003. [145950]

Mr. Boateng: This matter will be considered when the Efficiency Review reports later in the year.

Pre-Budget Report Summary Leaflet

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of the Pre-Budget Report Summary Leaflet, "The Strength to Take the Long-Term Decisions; Seizing the Opportunities of the Global Recovery", were printed ahead of the Chancellor's statement to the House; and how many such summary leaflets were printed in each of the last six years. [145444]

Ruth Kelly: Around 1.2 million of 2003 Pre-Budget Report summary leaflets were produced. The number of leaflets distributed in past exercises were: Budget 2001—400,000; Budget 2002—2,097,000; Budget 2003—1,230,000; and PBR 2002—1,500,000.

Private Sector Reviews

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reviews he has conducted since 1997 of the *(a)* policy, *(b)* funding and *(c)* regulation activity which impacts on the private sector; what the scope of each review was; what the outcome of each review was; and what changes have been made as a result of each review, with particular reference to public spending. [145951]

Mr. Boateng: The Government routinely reviews the impact of its activities on the private sector. Details of measures are found in the Budget, Pre-Budget and Spending Review reports published since 1997.

Public Service Delivery Organisations

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reviews he has conducted since 1997 of the way in which *(a)* policy is set for, *(b)* funding provided to and *(c)* quality regulated in front line public service delivery organisations; what the scope of each review was; what the outcome of each review was; and what changes he has made as a result of each review, with particular reference to public spending. [145944]

Mr. Boateng: The Government routinely reviews the impact of its activities on front-line public service delivery organisations. Details of major reforms since 1997 are to be found in subsequent Budget, Pre-Budget and Spending Review reports.

Tax Stamps (Whisky)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the cost to *(a)* the Treasury, *(b)* the whisky industry and *(c)* others of the proposed tax stamps on whisky; [145618]

(2) who will pay the cost of the strip stamps on whisky. [145619]

John Healey: The Government have made it clear that they will proceed with tax stamps for spirits if the industry is unable to put forward an alternative proposal that would be as effective in tackling spirits fraud.

Costs falling to the industry will depend on the measures which the Government take to implement tax stamps, and on the detail of the measures the Government plan to introduce to mitigate the impact on the legitimate industry. Details will be set out in the Budget following discussions with industry, and a regulatory impact assessment produced at the appropriate time.

The Government have begun discussions with the industry on the scope for alternative anti-fraud measures, and on both the impact of tax stamps on costs and measures that might help to minimise that impact. A full, updated estimate of those costs will be published in a draft Regulatory Impact Assessment, alongside draft legislation, in the spring.

The Government have estimated that tax stamps would reduce revenue losses from spirits fraud by at least £160 million a year from 2006–07. Customs will be set a precise outcome target for reducing spirits fraud, and the costs to Customs of administering tax stamps from 2006–07 will be considered, as part of the 2004 Spending Review.

Teenage Pregnancies

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many teenage pregnancies there were in the last 12 months. [145316]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Beggs, dated 5 January 2004:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking how many teenage pregnancies there were in the last 12 months. (145316)

In 2001, the latest year for which provisional figures are available, there were 40,966 teenage pregnancies in England and Wales (pregnancies at ages under 18).

Estimates for March quarter 2002, based on incomplete abortion data, were published in Health Statistics Quarterly 20, copies of which are available in the Libraries of the Houses.

Tonnage Tax Scheme

Mr. Hopkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the value was of financial concessions to the UK shipping industry through the tonnage tax scheme in each financial year since the concession was introduced. [145245]

Dawn Primarolo: 2000–01 an estimated cost of £10 million; 2001–02 an estimated cost of £25 million; 2002–03 an estimated cost of £35 million.

Mr. Hopkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the value was of *(a)* the tonnage tax scheme in (i) 2001–02 and (ii) 2002–03 and *(b)* tax paid by shipping companies in the last financial year of the previous arrangements. [145246]

Dawn Primarolo: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The estimated costs of the tonnage tax regime are published on the Inland Revenue website at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats/tax_expenditures/00ap_b1.htm.

(b) Shipping companies' tax liabilities for 1999–2000 are estimated at £60 million.

Waste Management (Funding)

Sue Doughty: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the waste management sector-related payments, subsidies and grants provided by the Government to *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* non-governmental organisations in each of the last five years. [144911]

John Healey: The information is as follows:

(a) Funding to local authorities

Local authorities' waste management responsibilities are funded through Revenue Support Grant, which includes support in respect of new burdens in the waste area. This is a general grant, on the basis of which local authorities are free to invest according to local spending priorities. Local government grant has increased by 30 per cent. in real terms since 1997. Local authorities' spending by area is detailed in table 3.5a of the 2003 edition of Local Government Finance Statistics England, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

The following table lists additional grants to local authorities introduced in 2002–03 related to waste management activities.

£ million

Source of funding	*2002–03*	*2003–04*
Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund	50	114
PFI credits	100	100

(b) Funding to Non-Governmental Organisations

The following table gives details of grants from the Environmental Action Fund since 1999 for projects with a clear waste priority. Information is not available for funding to grant recipients for wider-ranging activities which have had a waste-related component.

£

Funding recipient	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*	*2003–04*	*Total*
Community Recycling Network	59,400	59,400	85,450	200,000	219,250	623,500
Composting Association	0	0	0	84,000	93,750	177,750
Recycling Consortium	0	0	0	30,750	32,125	62,875
Waste Watch	99,000	110,000	198,000	200,000	232,934	839,934
National Waste Awareness Initiative	59,400	55,483	51,388	200,000	237,072	603,343
Miscellaneous 'Regional Environmental Action Fund' Grants[1]	259,599	382,274	135,658	57,808	—	835,339
Total	477,399	607,157	470,496	772, 558	815,131	3,142,741

[1] The regional element of the EAF was wound down in 2002–03. Regional EAF grants were of lower monetary value (starting from £3,500) and individual recipients are not listed.

HEALTH

Adverse Drug Reactions

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many adverse drug reactions have been reported by *(a)* nurses and *(b)* all health professionals to the electronic yellow card scheme since it was launched. [144313]

Ms Rosie Winterton: By 12 December 2003, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) had received 77 reports of suspected adverse drug reactions (ADRs) submitted by nurses using the electronic Yellow Card, out of a total of 293 electronic Yellow Card reports from all health professionals since the launch of the electronic Yellow Card on 31 October 2002. The MHRA is developing proposals to increase the awareness of the electronic Yellow Card by all healthcare professionals.

Age-related Macular Degeneration

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance on the use of photodynamic therapy for age-related macular degeneration within the NHS in England and Wales is implemented as soon as possible; and when he expects the implementation to be completed. [142980]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Implementation of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance is underway. Patients are already receiving photodynamic therapy (PDT) on the national health service and we expect implementation of the NICE guidance to have been completed by July 2004. We are working with the NHS to facilitate the implementation and to give patients increased access to PDT during this time.

NICE have recommended that PDT should be made available to individuals who have a confirmed diagnosis of classic with no occult subfoveal choroidal neovascularisation (CNV), and best-corrected visual acuity of 6/60 or better. PDT is not recommended for the treatment of people with predominantly classic subfoveal CNV (that is, 50 per cent. or more of the entire area of the lesion is classic CNV but some occult CNV is present) except as part of ongoing or new clinical studies.

Department of Health officials held a meeting on 4 November 2003 with specialised services commissioners who are leading the implementation process. It was made clear to specialised services commissioners that full implementation is to be complete by July 2004 and that it is expected that services that have the capacity to increase more quickly should do so. It was also made clear that patients with suspected classic with no occult CNV, for whom treatment has been recommended, should be treated wherever capacity exists to do so.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many trainee paramedics were employed by *(a)* Lincolnshire Ambulance Service and *(b)* each ambulance service in England and Wales on 1 December; [144608]

(2) many full-time paramedics were employed by *(a)* Lincolnshire Ambulance Service and *(b)* each ambulance service in England and Wales on 1 December. [144609]

Mr. Hutton: Information on the number of ambulance staff employed in the National Health Service by grade and organisation in England is shown in the table as at September 2002, the latest figures available. Information is not held centrally on the number of training places for paramedics.

Information for Wales is a matter for the devolved administration.

NHS hospital and community health service: All ambulance staff in England and each specified Trust as at 30 September 2002

		Whole time equivalent				
		All ambulance staff	*Ambulance manager*	*Ambulance paramedic*	*Ambulance personnel*	*Ambulance trainee*
England		17,076	598	7,022	7,357	2,098
5GT	Great Yarmouth PCT	0	0	0	0	0
5KC	Durham and Chester-le-Street PCT	1	0	0	1	0
5LA	Kensington and Chelsea PCT	4	0	1	3	0
5LC	Westminster PCT	0	0	0	0	0
5MV	Wolverhampton City PCT	13	13	0	0	0
RA9	South Devon Health Care NHS Trust	2	0	2	0	0
RB1	Avon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	356	4	189	90	73
RB4	Essex Ambulance Service NHS Trust	566	34	220	251	62
RB5	Gloucestershire Ambulance Services NHS Trust	216	21	97	77	20
RB6	Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust	758	7	280	365	106
RB7	Staffordshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	314	12	203	96	3
RB8	South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Services NHS Trust	459	54	130	262	14
RBX	Lincolnshire Ambulance and Health Transport Service NHS Trust	396	18	181	137	60
RE6	Cumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust	272	7	120	113	34
RFU	Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	504	0	348	156	0

NHS hospital and community health service: All ambulance staff in England and each specified Trust as at 30 September 2002

Whole time equivalent

		All ambulance staff	*Ambulance manager*	*Ambulance paramedic*	*Ambulance personnel*	*Ambulance trainee*
RGH	West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust	899	0	247	508	144
RH1	Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	299	0	99	88	111
RHP	Dorset Ambulance NHS Trust	250	9	167	60	14
RHR	Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	199	0	94	72	33
RHY	Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust	370	74	92	117	87
RJ1	Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust	18	0	0	18	0
RJ9	Westcountry Ambulance Services NHS Trust	918	2	460	297	160
RKA	West Midlands Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust	927	17	493	219	198
RKD	Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	373	20	173	126	54
RL5	Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service NHS Trust	222	8	105	98	11
RL6	Warwickshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	299	17	77	190	15
RMA	Greater Manchester Ambulance Service NHS Trust	758	41	327	278	111
RMD	Lancashire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	654	16	165	462	12
RMZ	East Anglian Ambulance NHS Trust	871	2	457	394	19
RNY	Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust	138	5	55	52	26
RPH	Kent Ambulance NHS Trust	619	18	189	324	88
RPQ	Surrey Ambulance Service NHS Trust	348	6	147	155	40
RQ2	Sussex Ambulance Service NHS Trust	525	1	247	215	62
RR2	Isle Of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust	67	3	38	24	2
RRU	London Ambulance Service NHS Trust	2,426	152	752	1,139	383
RTJ	Surrey Hampshire Borders NHS Trust	1	1	0	0	0
RV1	Tees East and North Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	623	17	295	237	74
RV6	East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust	821	14	319	457	31
RVK	North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust	590	7	254	277	52

NHS hospital and community health service: All ambulance staff in England and each specified Trust as at 30 September 2002

Headcount

		All ambulance staff	*Ambulance manager*	*Ambulance paramedic*	*Ambulance personnel*	*Ambulance trainee*
England		17,712	606	7,147	7,856	2,103
5GT	Great Yarmouth PCT	1	1	0	0	0
5KC	Durham and Chester-le-Street PCT	1	0	0	1	0
5LA	Kensington and Chelsea PCT	4	0	1	3	0
5LC	Westminster PCT	1	0	0	1	0
5MV	Wolverhampton City PCT	15	15	0	0	0
RA9	South Devon Health Care NHS Trust	2	0	2	0	0
RB1	Avon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	370	4	196	97	73
RB4	Essex Ambulance Service NHS Trust	623	34	233	294	62
RB5	Gloucestershire Ambulance Services NHS Trust	222	21	103	78	20
RB6	Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust	792	7	281	398	106
RB7	Staffordshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	321	14	206	98	3
RB8	South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Services NHS Trust	485	54	133	284	14
RBX	Lincolnshire Ambulance and Health Transport Service NHS Trust	396	18	181	137	60
RE6	Cumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust	311	5	121	151	34
RFU	Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	521	0	351	170	0
RGH	West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust	1,025	0	252	628	145
RH1	Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	306	0	101	93	112
RHP	Dorset Ambulance NHS Trust	253	9	169	61	14
RHR	Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	208	0	98	77	33
RHY	Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust	371	75	92	117	87
RJ1	Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust	18	0	0	18	0
RJ9	Westcountry Ambulance Services NHS Trust	927	2	464	301	160
RKA	West Midlands Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust	932	17	495	222	198
RKD	Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	382	20	179	129	54
RL5	Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service NHS Trust	227	9	107	100	11
RL6	Warwickshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	304	17	77	195	15
RMA	Greater Manchester Ambulance Service NHS Trust	770	41	334	283	112
RMD	Lancashire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	692	16	166	498	12
RMZ	East Anglian Ambulance NHS Trust	947	2	467	459	19
RNY	Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust	144	5	60	53	26
RPH	Kent Ambulance NHS Trust	668	18	191	371	88
RPQ	Surrey Ambulance Service NHS Trust	357	6	152	159	40
RQ2	Sussex Ambulance Service NHS Trust	535	1	254	218	62

		All ambulance staff	Ambulance manager	Ambulance paramedic	Ambulance personnel	Ambulance trainee
RR2	Isle Of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust	67	3	38	24	2
RRU	London Ambulance Service NHS Trust	2,462	153	770	1,155	384
RTJ	Surrey Hampshire Borders NHS Trust	1	1	0	0	0
RV1	Tees East and North Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	631	17	298	242	74
RV6	East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust	827	14	320	462	31
RVK	North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust	593	7	255	279	52

Notes:
Figures are rounded to the nearest whole number
Source:
Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the percentage increase in emergency calls to ambulance trusts *(a)* over the last year and *(b)* over the last six years for (i) England and (ii) each ambulance trust. [144938]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Information about emergency calls to ambulance trusts is published annually in a statistical bulletin. The latest data are in "Ambulance Services, England: 2002–03", available at http://www.doh.gov.uk/sb0313.htm. The information requested is shown in the table.

Percentage increase in emergency calls from 1996–97 to 2002–03 and from 2001–02 to 2002–03 by ambulance service

Ambulance service	Number of emergency calls in 2002–03 (thousand)	Percentage increase 2002–03 over 1996–97	Percentage increase 2002–03 over 2001–02
England	4,957.3	49	5
Rural services			
Cumbria Ambulance NHS Trust	33.9	79	15
North East Ambulance NHS Trust[1]	197.8	32	2
Tees, East and North Yorkshire Ambulance NHS Trust[1]	164.4	23	6
East Midlands Ambulance NHS Trust[1]	301.6	81	1
Lincolnshire Ambulance NHS Trust	91.5	238	35
East Anglian Ambulance NHS Trust	156.8	77	8
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust	137.7	69	5
Essex Ambulance NHS Trust	141.8	50	7
Sussex Ambulance NHS Trust	159.4	42	5
Kent Ambulance NHS Trust	144.8	72	26
Dorset Ambulance NHS Trust	67.3	61	-7
Hampshire Ambulance NHS Trust	119.1	80	27
Wiltshire Ambulance NHS Trust	47.2	124	10
Isle of Wight Ambulance Service (NHS Trust)	11.1	84	6
Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust	64.8	37	9
The Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust	98.3	87	23
Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust	44.8	56	11
West Country Ambulance NHS Trust	157.6	59	9
Gloucestershire Ambulance NHS Trust	47.9	118	5
Hereford and Worcester Ambulance NHS Trust	43.5	51	7
Shropshire Ambulance Service	35.1	93	11
Staffordshire Ambulance NHS Trust	121.0	85	1
Warwickshire Ambulance NHS Trust	43.0	95	5
Lancashire Ambulance NHS Trust	132.5	37	-3
Urban services			
West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance NHS Trust	234.2	60	3
South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance NHS Trust	127.6	77	20
Surrey Ambulance NHS Trust	99.1	30	1
London Ambulance NHS Trust	1,030.6	25	-1
Avon Ambulance NHS Trust	84.1	66	7
West Midlands Metropolitan Ambulance NHS Trust	289.3	41	15
Mersey Regional Ambulance NHS Trust	247.4	35	1
Greater Manchester Ambulance NHS Trust	292.0	35	3

[1] Service created in 1999; comparisons with 1996–97 are with the aggregate total for the pre-merger services.

Note:
There may be more than one emergency call to a single incident
Source:
Form KA34

Arrhythmias

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will extend the National Service Framework to include targets for the diagnosis and treatment of arrhythmias; and if he will make a statement. [145074]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Government are committed to reducing the death rate from coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke and related diseases in people under 75 by at least 40 per cent. by 2010. The national service framework for CHD, published in March 2000, sets the agenda for the modernisation of CHD services over a 10 year period in order to achieve this target.

The focus of the work on cardiac arrhythmia is on early diagnosis for this group of patients. The Department is investing in diagnosis, investigation and treatment of cardiac related problems. In November 2001, the Department announced £65 million from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and £60 million from the Department of Health to enable the rapid expansion of facilities for angiography, to fund 89 new or replacement catheterisation laboratories.

Audiology

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people are waiting for the fitting of hearing aids in each primary care trust, having already had an assessment; and what the average time between assessment and fitting has been in the last 12 months; [144999]

(2) what service standards he has set for NHS audiology services, with particular reference to the length of time for which patients for audiology services wait; and what action the Government is taking to improve performance against standards; [145034]

(3) if he will make it the policy of the Government that those who have been waiting for more than six months for an *(a)* audiology hearing assessment and *(b)* audiology assessment should be able to have such assessments (i) carried out privately and paid for by the NHS and (ii) carried out overseas at NHS expense; [145049]

(4) if he will list in respect of each primary care trust the number of people waiting for a hearing assessment, and the number waiting for more than six months. [145052]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* While there are no targets for waiting times for audiology services, we are taking action to tackle the causes of longer waits as part of our programme to modernise hearing aid services in England.

The modernisation project team at the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the Action On team from the NHS Modernisation Agency are working with sites to help them reduce waiting times. In this financial year, we are investing £1.56 million in specific initiatives to increase the capacity of individual audiology departments. We are introducing a new, more streamlined patient process in modernised sites. We are looking at ways to increase the number of trained audiologists in the longer term and are encouraging partnerships between national health service trusts and high street registered hearing aid dispensers to increase capacity and make NHS hearing aids available, free of charge, from an increasing number of convenient locations.

Care Homes

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will explain the methods used to arrive at his conclusions that *(a)* 80 per cent. of people would like to live at home rather than in a care home and *(b)* 10,000 care home vacancies exist; where these vacancies exist; in what geographical areas there is a shortage; and if he will publish the research documents. [145623]

Dr. Ladyman: A 1999 study titled, "Attitudes and Aspirations of Older People: A Review of the Literature", by Boaz, A, et al and published by the Department of Social Security, found that up to 80 per cent., of older people would strongly prefer to remain in their own home for as long as possible.

The source of the 10,000 spare capacity in care homes is Laing & Buisson's "Care of Elderly People Market Survey 2003". The report indicates in Table 2.2 that there are 470, 600 places in care homes (excluding long stay NHS beds). According to Table 5.1 demand for care places is some 460,000 people. Thus, there is 'spare' capacity of over 10,000 places in the United Kingdom. Further detail about the care home market can be found in the report.

Communicable Diseases

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many specialist consultants in infectious diseases there are in the UK. [145040]

Mr. Hutton: The table shows the number of consultants in the infectious diseases specialty in England as at 30 June 2003. Information for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for devolved administrations.

Hospital, Public Health Medicine and Community Health Services (HCHS): Staff in the infectious diseases specialty in England

Number (headcount)

	30 September 2002	*30 June 2003*
All staff	241	[1]—
of which:		
Consultant	95	107

[1] Figure not available. The data are from the June mini census, which collected only consultant figures.

Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census.

Community Health Council Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many former Community Health Council staff members have found continuing employment in the health service; how many have officially been declared redundant; and what the cost is to the Exchequer of the redundancy payments to be made to them. [145247]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Figures taken at the end of October show that 119 community health council (CHC) staff had found alternative employment in the health service. We estimate that 470 staff were made redundant as a result of the closure of CHCs on

1 December 2003 at a total cost of redundancy in the region of £14.5 million. The final figures will be confirmed in January.

Complaints (Berkshire)

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what requirements were included in the contract awarded to SEAP for the provision of an independent complaints advisory service for Berkshire; [144827]

(2) what arrangements he has put in place to provide support and advice to patients with a complaint against the NHS in Berkshire pending establishment of an independent complaints advisory service; [144828]

(3) when he expects an independent complaints advisory service to be established for Berkshire. [144829]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Contracts for the delivery of independent commission advocacy services (ICAS) were awarded through a competitive tendering exercise, which demanded providers to put in place good quality, accessible complaints support for people wishing to complain against the national health service. South East Advocacy Project (SEAP) was judged to meet the criteria and was approved to provide services in the Berkshire area. The Department and the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) are monitoring the delivery of services against standards and performance indicators.

ICAS was established on 1 September 2003 and has been available nationally, including for Berkshire, since 15 October 2003.

More information can be found at the CPPIH's website at: http://www.cppih.org/index.html

Continuing Care (National Health Service Responsibilities) Directions 2003

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish the consultation responses his Department has received with regard to the draft Continuing Care (National Health Service Responsibilities) Directions 2003; [144956]

(2) when he will publish the Continuing Care (National Health Service Responsibilities) Directions 2003. [144957]

Dr. Ladyman: The Continuing Care (National Health Service Responsibilities) Directions will be published early in 2004. There were a number of responses to the consultation on the draft Directions, leading to amendments where appropriate. A summary of the responses will be available in due course through http://www.doh.gov.uk/consultations/index.htm

Deaf People

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many interpreters for deaf people are available in each hospital trust; [145016]

(2) how many interpreters for deaf people are employed by the NHS. [145018]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are in place to communicate with deaf mothers in labour in hospital maternity departments. [145017]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department is firmly committed to improving access to information services and levels of awareness of disability issues, in particular by supporting the national health service in meeting legislative requirements. We are working in partnership with the Disability Rights Commission to take forward a series of actions aimed at improving the experiences of disabled people in the health and social care system. A working group is being established to drive forward work on access and communications.

Dentistry

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices in *(a)* England and *(b)* each strategic health authority there were in each of the last six years; and how many (i) registered adults exempt from charges and (ii) registered children from nought to 18 years there were in each of the last six years. [144320]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Table 1 shows the available information for the number of general dental service (GDS) practices in England and each strategic health authority in each of the last six years.

Adult patient registrations are not available separately for patients exempt from charges because no charge is made for patients' registrations. The number of registered children at 30 September in each of the last six years is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: General Dental Service—Number of GDS dental practices by strategic health authority at 31 August each year

	Number of dental practices					
Strategic Health Authority	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
England	8,681	8,736	8,784	8,624	8,597	8,623
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire SHA	407	412	397	379	375	382
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire SHA	281	294	296	304	300	303
Birmingham and The Black Country SHA	371	376	375	368	370	372
Cheshire and Merseyside SHA	442	435	432	411	399	396
County Durham and Tees Valley SHA	176	178	179	179	176	176
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire SHA	231	228	232	226	224	227
Cumbria and Lancashire SHA	326	331	328	323	328	324
Dorset and Somerset SHA	220	218	223	219	221	230
Essex SHA	238	244	247	247	246	248
Greater Manchester SHA	475	469	471	459	450	451
Hampshire and Isle of Wight SHA	309	317	315	316	317	313
Kent and Medway SHA	279	281	279	267	271	276

Table 1: General Dental Service—Number of GDS dental practices by strategic health authority at 31 August each year

Strategic Health Authority	Number of dental practices					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland SHA	233	240	242	234	234	237
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire SHA	338	342	346	346	346	343
North and East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire SHA	264	266	265	256	255	251
North Central London SHA	280	283	285	283	285	287
North East London SHA	242	243	243	235	236	239
North West London SHA	440	440	444	431	420	421
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear SHA	237	240	242	238	234	228
Shropshire and Staffordshire SHA	233	235	237	232	233	238
South East London SHA	273	248	253	251	246	248
South West London SHA	275	282	281	276	279	274
South West Peninsula SHA	293	294	304	292	285	289
South Yorkshire SHA	219	219	218	214	209	213
Surrey and Sussex SHA	518	523	536	544	553	559
Thames Valley SHA	354	368	375	371	376	381
Trent SHA	359	364	369	360	368	361
West Yorkshire SHA	368	366	370	363	361	356

Table 2: General Dental Service—England Registration of children aged under 18

September each year	Millions Number
1998	6.78
1999	6.82
2000	6.85
2001	6.78
2002	6.73
2003	6.64

Source:
Dental Practice Board

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of Castle Point residents were registered with an NHS dentist in each of the last five years. [145161]

Dr. Ladyman: Registration rates are shown in the table for the health administration areas, South Essex Health Authority area for September in the years 1999 to 2001, Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust (PCT) area for September in the years 2002 and 2003.

General Dental Service: Proportion of the population registered with a dentist 1999 to 2003 in health areas containing Castle Point

At 30 September	Percentage of population registered with a GDS dentist
South Essex HA area	
1999[1]	44.6
2000[1]	46.3
2001[2]	45.5
Castle Point and Rochford PCT area	
2002[2]	45.5
2003[2]	40.6

[1] 1998–2000 ONS mid year population estimates based on the 1991 census.

[2] 2001 ONS mid year population estimates based on the 2001 census

The registration rates are calculated by dividing the number of patients registered with a dentist who is located in the area by the estimate of the total population for that area. Some patients attend a dentist in a different area from the one in which they live and so the registration and population numbers do not cover the same people.

Registrations lapse if patients do not return to their dentist within 15 months and so the registration figures exclude patients who have not been to their general dental service dentist within the past 15 months. Also excluded from the figures are patients who receive dental treatment from other national health service dental services including dental access centres.

Departmental Policies

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the impact of his Department's policies on the Regent's Park and Kensington, North constituency since 1997. [145417]

Mr. Hutton: Detailed information on the impact of departmental policies nationally is set out in the Department of Health Annual reports. A copy of the most recent report "Department of Health—Government Expenditure Plans 2003/2004" is available in the Library and on the Department's website.

The impact of policies is not examined by constituency and statistics collected centrally by the Department are not collected on a constituency basis.

My hon. Friend's constituency falls within the geographical area covered by Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trusts (PCT), Chelsea and Westminster National Health Service Trust, St. Mary's NHS Trust and the former Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority (HA).

Allocations to Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster HA

Period	Allocation	Cash increase		Real terms increase	
	£000	£000	Percentage	£000	Percentage
1997–98	201,166	8,744	4.54	4,800	2.49
1998–99	212,220	10,976	5.45	5,296	2.63
1999–2000	286,339	22,944	8.71	15,960	6.06
2000–01	321,111	31,368	10.83	23,536	8.12
2001–02	361,234	33,942	10.37	25,131	7.68
2002–03	436,168	45,127	11.68	34,607	8.96

Notes:

1. Figures for 1997–98 and 1998–99 are not comparable to the later figures, as these are for Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) only.

2. From 1999–2000 allocations have included HCHS, GMS cash limited and prescribing components (2002–03 saw the addition of HIV/Aids and GMS non cash limited components).

Kensington and Chelsea PCT will receive allocations of £202.06 million in 2003–04, £221.87 million in 2004–05 and £243.04 million in 2005–06. These represent a cash increase of £57.71 million or 31.14 per cent. over the three years, compared to a national average of 30.83 per cent. Kensington and Chelsea PCT will be 15.37 per cent. over target by 2005–06.

Westminster PCT will receive allocations of £263.88 million in 2003–04, £289.44 million in 2004–05 and £316.79 million in 2005–06. These represent a cash increase of £74.58 million or 30.79 per cent. over the three years, compared to a national average of 30.83 per cent. Westminster PCT will be 29.88 per cent. over target by 2005–06.

Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster HA and the trusts within it have also received additional funding for certain policies. This includes:

£745,000 for accident and emergency modernisation in 2000–01.

Nationally, in 2000–01 recurrent investment of £50 million was available for the improvement of cancer services. For 2001–02, an additional £255 million was available nationally for cancer care.

£3.2 million, £599,000 and £905,000 to reduce waiting lists and times in 1998–99, 1999–2000 and 2000–01 respectively.

£1.6 million to expand critical care services in 2000–01.

£2.4 million and £1.6 million to deal with winter pressures in 1998–99 and 2000–01 respectively.

£3.1 million for heart disease services in 2000–01.

I am informed by North West London Strategic Health Authority that in 2002–03, the Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea PCT's overall allocation included the following earmarked funding for certain policies (there has been no earmarked funding in 2003–04):

£845,000 for mental health.

£675,000 for coronary heart disease.

£855,00 for cancer.

£625,000 for information management and technology.

£94,000 for primary care.

£4.785 million for capacity.

One of the public's principal concerns about the NHS has been waiting times. Waiting list information for St. Mary's and Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trusts is shown in the tables.

Patients waiting for elective admission: St. Mary's NHS Trust

Month end	Total waiting list	Patients waiting over nine months	Patients waiting over 12 months
March 1997	5,801	539	149
October 2003	3,726	87	0

Source:
Department of Health form KH07 and Monthly Monitoring.

Waiting times for first consultant out-patient appointment St. Mary's NHS Trust

	GP written referrals			
	Patients seen		Patients still waiting	
Quarter	Total	Percentage seen within 13 weeks	More than 13 weeks	More than 26 weeks
Q4 1996–97	9,903	86	3,871	1,884
Q2 2003–04	10,370	79	1,106	0

Source:
Department of Health form QM08.

Patients waiting for elective admission: Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trust

Month end	Total waiting list	Patients waiting over nine months	Patients waiting over 12 months
March 1997	1,888	67	22
October 2003	3,108	88	0

Source:
Department of Health form KH07 and Monthly Monitoring.

Waiting times for first consultant out-patient appointment Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trust

	GP written referrals			
	Patients seen		Patients still waiting	
Quarter	Total	Percentage seen within 13 weeks	More than 13 weeks	More than 26 weeks
Q4 1996–97	9,055	93	1,138	310
Q2 2003–04	7,459	83	503	0

Source:
Department of Health form QM08.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, columns 502–3W, on departmental staff, (1) if he will list the job titles of each member of staff in the Health and Social Care Delivery Group; [144952]

(2) if he will list the job titles of each member of staff in the Health and Social Care Standards and Quality Business Group; [144953]

(3) if he will list the job titles of each member of staff in the Strategy and Business Development Group. [144954]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department is currently undergoing an extensive change programme. The basic framework has been agreed and was detailed in my previous answer. Job titles and details of the structure are subject to confirmation by group directors.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer of 10 December, Official Report, columns 502–3W, on departmental staff, what the activities are of each business group. [144955]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The activities of the Department's three business groups are as follows:

Delivery—responsible for supporting the delivery of the targets set out in the NHS Plan. These include reducing waiting times, increasing choice for National Health Service patients, securing resources for NHS and local government organisations, ensuring the NHS has the capacity to deliver services to patients, and integrating NHS information technology systems to deliver modernised patient services.

Standards and Quality—responsible for the majority of our policy-making responsibilities, ranging from leading-edge scientific developments and medical innovations, such as stem cell research, to lifestyle issues such as obesity. The group will set standards and define quality in health and social care services, maintain and promote health and well being, ensure safety of patients and service users, and deliver some of the Government's key programmes, such as tackling coronary heart disease and cancer.

Strategy and Business Development—responsible for important corporate services (such as communications, corporate human resources and information technology), ensuring the Department is run effectively and efficiently. The group also leads important programmes and policies (such as system reform, equality, medicine and pharmacy, user experience and involvement and professional leadership).

The new structure of the Department is as follows:

Department of Health Mangement Board

Permanent Secretary and Chief Executive—Sir Nigel Crisp

John Bacon, Sir Liam Donaldson, Hugh Taylor, Sian Jarvis, Sarah Mullally, Richard Douglas, Directory of Strategy

Health and Social Care Standards and Quality

Group Director—Sir Liam Donaldson

804 posts

Health Protection, International Health and Scientific Development

Research and Development

Quality and Standards

Health Improvement

Care Services

Regional Public Health

Group Business Team

Strategy and Business Development

Group Director—Hugh Taylor

815 posts

Group Business Team

Corporate Management and Development

Hugh Taylor

Corporate Human Resources

Information Services

Customer Services

Medicines Pharmacy and Industry

Secretariat

User Experience and Involvement

Sarah Mullally

Improving Patient Experience Programme

The Professions

Communications

Sian Jarvis

Media Centre Campaign

Management Strategy

Policy Communications

Programmes and Planning

Strategy

Strategy Unit

Corporate Analytical Centre

Customer Intelligence

System and Policy Development

Health and Social Care Services Delivery

Group Director—John Bacon

626 posts

Access

Finance and Investment

Workforce

Information Systems and National Programme Delivery

Programmes and Performance

Group Business Team

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the rationale was for reducing the number of posts in his Department by 1,400; and from which policy areas the posts will be taken. [145024]

Ms Rosie Winterton: We recognised that the Department must change to reflect recent changes in the national health service and social care. It was clear that, with the Government's focus on shifting power to the frontline and the formation of many independent bodies, the Department's role and functions would reduce. We decided a reduction of at least a third was necessary to reflect our new role in providing strategic direction and leadership to the NHS and social care.

The radical Change Programme will reduce the size of the core Department by 1,400—from over 3,600 posts to 2,200—by October 2004. This represents a 38 per cent. reduction at the centre. Half of those posts will not be replaced and will be achieved by efficiency savings, while the rest of the reduction will result from transferring posts to other national bodies, which are also the subject of review.

We have indicated our intention to maintain the current proportion of Departmental staff in Leeds and London. The final numbers at each location are yet to be finalised. We estimate that most of the reductions will be through natural turnover or early retirements. A voluntary scheme has already been launched for those over 50. The Department has had a 'vacancy freeze' in place for the last six months, to ensure staff are given the best opportunities to seek alternative posts, and we are actively monitoring turnover. The Department is using professional support to help those staff affected by the changes.

Diagnostic and Treatment Centres

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned for an evaluation of diagnostic and treatment centres. [144949]

Mr. Hutton: An evaluation of National Health Service treatment centres has been commissioned from a consortium made up of University College London and the University of Southampton, under the NHS service delivery and organisation research programme. The evaluation began in March 2003 and is being carried out over three years.

Doctors' Earnings

Gregory Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his estimate is of the earnings of *(a)* a locum doctor and *(b)* a doctor with a permanent position within an NHS trust in the last year for which figures are available. [142395]

Mr. Hutton: Estimated annual earnings of hospital doctors as at August 2002 (the latest figures available) are given in the table.

Staff grade	*Mean year earnings (£)*
Consultant	82,936
Non-consultant career grades	56,751
House officer	28,201
Other hospital grades	58,103
Registrars	52,623
Senior house officer	41,124

Information is not held centrally on the average annual earnings of locum doctors.

Domiciliary Care

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many domiciliary care providers have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* met the registration standards. [140640]

Dr. Ladyman: As at 30 November, 4,322 domiciliary care providers have applied for registration. 3,155 of these applications have been validated and are being processed, and 243 domiciliary care providers met the registration standard.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many domiciliary care providers have been registered by the National Care Standards Commission in each region. [140642]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Region	*Services registered*
South West	72
South East	70
London	40
West Midlands	20
North West	20
North East	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	6
East Midlands	6
Eastern	2
Total	243

Note:
Information as at 30 November 2003.

Drug Eluting Stents

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how he plans to incorporate guidance from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence on drug eluting stents into the National Standards Framework on coronary heart disease; [145783]

(2) whether his Department has estimated the cost to the NHS of the increased use of drug eluting stents following guidance from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. [145782]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The national service framework for coronary heart disease (NSF CHD), published in March 2000, sets the agenda for the modernisation of CHD services over a 10 year period. Standard 10 deals with revascularisation and states that 'NHS Trusts should put in place hospital-wide systems of care so that patients with suspected or confirmed coronary heart disease receive timely and appropriate investigation and treatment to relieve their symptoms and reduce their risk of subsequent coronary events'.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on drug eluting stents (DES) provides clinical guidance highlighting patients who would most benefit from the treatment. NICE guidance is for healthcare professionals and patients and their carers to help them make decisions about treatment and healthcare and to inform their delivery of the NSF standard.

The NICE guidance estimates that the additional cost of drug eluting stents would be between £6 million and £7.2 million per year, assuming the use of about 12,000 DES costing an additional £500 to £600 each.

Electronic Care Record System

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what mechanism he proposes to fund the estimated cost of the planned NHS electronic care record system; and where the money for the upkeep of the system will come from. [142704]

Mr. Hutton: The national health service electronic care record is one element of the national programme for information technology (NPfIT) in the national health service. Central funding for the NPfIT in the NHS is to be made available from the Spending Review 2002 as follows: £370 million in 2003–04: £730 million in 2004–05 and £1.2 billion in 2005–06.

Future maintenance costs will form part of the ongoing financial management processes within future Spending Review envelopes. By 2008, IT funding will be in line with the levels proposed within the Wanless Review; that is, to four per cent. of total NHS expenditure.

Electronic Recruitment

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what right existing publishers will have to republish listings of jobs advertised via the electronic recruitment project; and how listings will be made available to publishers. [144824]

Mr. Hutton: Jobs which appear on the electronic recruitment site are with national health service employers. These employers are independent statutory corporations. They own the copyright to the job vacancies. The Department of Health hosts the vacancies on their behalf. The Department does not own the copyright and is not able to allow existing publishers to copy vacancies from the site for advertising in other media. The electronic recruitment project is intended to reduce the cost to the NHS of advertising job vacancies and to allow the NHS to make better use of its resources.

The project team is committed to working with existing publishers both through the digital content forum and bi-lateral meetings with individual publishers to develop the service. NHS employers will require a combination of advertising media to meet their recruitment requirements.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the percentage of NHS trusts required to use the electronic recruitment service to achieve the desired cost savings. [144826]

Mr. Hutton: The estimated cost savings are based upon 75 per cent. of potential national health service job vacancies being advertised via the electronic recruitment service.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to charge NHS users for the services provided by the planned electronic recruitment project; and whether NHS trusts' top line recruitment budgets will be altered to fund the electronic recruitment project. [144904]

Mr. Hutton: The Electronic Recruitment Service will be funded by the Department until April 2006. The method of funding after that date is still to be determined.

EU Health Insurance Cards

Ms Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the introduction of EU health insurance cards in the UK. [143518]

Mr. Hutton: At the Barcelona European Council, the European Union member states, including the United Kingdom, signed up to a new European health insurance card to replace the existing paper form E111, to be introduced by 1 June 2004. Those countries which do not have an existing infrastructure for health card issue may apply for an extension of the date of introduction to 31 December 2005. The UK has obtained such an extension.

A decision has yet to be made on how the Council decision will be implemented in the UK. A scoping study is currently underway.

Food Supplements Directive

Dr. Iddon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further practical assistance will be given to industry by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Food Standards Agency in relation to the remaining ingredients that will not benefit from the more flexible interpretation of the requirements for dossier production under the provisions of the Food Supplements Directive agreed on 14 October; and if he will make a statement. [144869]

Miss Melanie Johnson: In drafting The Food Supplements Regulations (England) 2003, the Government have already made full use of the flexibilities available in the Food Supplements Directive. The Food Standards Agency secured a valuable meeting between representatives of United Kingdom food supplements manufacturers and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on 14 October to discuss dossier requirements, and has disseminated EFSA's advice to interested parties.

Foundation Status

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest in membership have been received for each of the first wave of foundation applicant trusts. [144811]

Mr. Hutton: Information on expected membership numbers will be included in the formal applications made to the Independent Regulator. These applications will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place copies of foundation trust applications in the Library. [144951]

Mr. Hutton: The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 provides for National Health Service trusts to submit their applications for NHS foundation trust to the Independent Regulator. I will arrange for copies of the applications submitted to the Independent Regulator to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which applicants for foundation hospital trust status have indicated to him that they are considering pulling out of the application process; and what reasons they have cited. [145012]

Mr. Hutton: All 25 national health service trusts who were invited have submitted preparatory materials seeking the Secretary of State's support for an application for NHS foundation trust status.

General Practitioners

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures are used to collect central statistics to monitor progress towards the 48-hour general practitioner access target; and if he will publish the latest statistics available. [144941]

Mr. Hutton: Performance is monitored through a monthly survey by primary care trusts of their general practices.

In October 2003, this survey showed that nationally, 94 per cent. of patients were able to be offered an appointment to see a general practitioner within two working days.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from primary care trusts about the effect of high property prices on general practitioners setting up new premises; what his Department's policy is on the issue; and if he will make a statement. [144592]

Mr. Hutton: I am not aware of any general concerns raised by primary care trusts about general practitioners experiencing difficulties setting up new premises because of high property prices. The arrangements to reimburse general practitioner premises costs take account of differing property prices.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of the adult population of England are registered with a general practitioner. [145197]

Mr. Hutton: At 30 September 2002 (the latest published data), 41,635,243 people aged 16 years and over were recorded as registered with a general practitioner or provider of personal medical services in England.

It is not possible to express these figures accurately as a percentage of the adult population, as the phenomenon of "list inflation' means that registered populations are

typically larger than actual populations. This phenomenon arises where a patient moves his or her registration and for a period may be registered on two lists. Similarly, an individual who dies or moves abroad may remain on a list for a time.

Geriatricians

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* consultant geriatricians and *(b)* geriatricians below the level of consultant were employed in England and Wales in each year since 1997. [145627]

Mr. Hutton: Information relating to Wales is a matter for the Welsh assembly.

The available information is shown in the table.

Hospital, public health medicine and community health services (HCHS): medical staff within the geriatric medicine specialty—England[1]

Numbers (headcount)

	1997	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*March 2003*	*June 2003*
All staff	2,527	2,560	2,505	2,572	2,558	2,707	[2]—	[2]—
Of which								
Consultant	677	712	719	767	781	861	883	894
All other grades	1,850	1,848	1,786	1,805	1,777	1,846	[2]—	[2]—

[1] Data as at 30 September 1997 to 2002, 31 March 2003 and 30 June 2003.
[2] Denotes not available. This is due to data for March and June 2003 being taken from the mini censuses which collected consultants only.
Source:
Department of Health Medical and Dental Workforce Census

Between September 1997 and June 2003, consultant numbers in geriatric medicine increased by 32 per cent.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of staff in his Department contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143905]

Ms Rosie Winterton: On average around 2 per cent. of the Department's staff (100 people) contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme. For the month of November 2003, £11,124.30 was donated, (this figure will change each month as staff join and leave the scheme).

A range of initiatives are periodically undertaken including inviting charitable organisations onto the Department's premises to promote themselves and encourage staff participation.

Giving to charity through Give as You Earn is unlikely to reflect fully the charitable activity of the Department's employees. Giving to charity is a very personal and often private choice. Many of the Department's employees may donate to charity or volunteer their time and skills.

GP Referrals

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions there are on direct referral by general practitioners to *(a)* therapists, *(b)* hospital diagnostics and *(c)* other general practitioners with a specialist interest; if he will list the reasons for these restrictions; and what plans his Department has to remove those restrictions. [143703]

Mr. Hutton: There are no centrally imposed restrictions on the direct referral of patients by general practitioners to therapists, hospital diagnostics, or other GPs with a specialist interest.

Haemophilia

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many haemophiliacs were diagnosed in each year since 1975; [143397]

(2) how many haemophiliacs died from blood product acquired infections in each year since 1975; [143398]

(3) how many haemophiliacs in the UK have been treated in each year since 1975 for *(a)* HIV, *(b)* hepatitis C and *(c)* CJD acquired from contaminated blood products. [143399]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The United Kingdom Haemophilia Centre Doctors Organisation estimate that 40 new Haemophilia A cases and three to four Haemophilia B cases are expected each year. The number of expected mild haemophilia cases is not available.

Viral inactivation of blood products and screening for HIV were first introduced in 1985. The number of haemophilia patients infected with HIV/AIDS from infected national health service blood products, registered with the Macfarlane Trust, who have died before and since 1988 when the Trust was set up, is shown in the table.

	Number or patients infected with HIV/AIDS
Pre 1988	87
1988	39
1989	54
1990	64
1991	72
1992	78
1993	88
1994	95
1995	90
1996	48
1997	33
1998	22
1999	19
2000	24
2001	13
2002	12

The latest information from the United Kingdom Haemophilia Centre Doctors Organisation show 212 patients with haemophilia have died from liver disease.

Health Care Commissioning

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish a statement of the costs, with particular reference to costs relating to NHS reference costs, of commissioning *(a)* independent and *(b)* private sector health care by the NHS. [141316]

Mr. Hutton: Information will be included in "NHS Reference Costs 2003", which I expect to publish shortly. The publication will include separate expenditure data for treatments undertaken by national health service and non-NHS providers. The data does not, however, distinguish between not-for-profit and commercial providers.

Healthy Living Centres

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department monitors the usage of healthy living centres. [144568]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department of Health has commissioned the Tavistock Institute to carry out an evaluation of the healthy living centre programme against key health priorities such as cancer and coronary heart disease prevention. The usage of healthy living centres is monitored by the New Opportunities Fund by absolute numbers as well as by gender, ethnicity and age.

Hospital Beds (Christmas)

Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he has put in place to ensure adequate provision of hospital beds over the Christmas period in Waverley and Guildford. [143543]

Ms Rosie Winterton: In line with our policy on "Shifting the Balance of Power", responsibility for local services now rests with local trusts.

Cranleigh Village Hospital and Haslemere Community Hospitals will be closed between 19 December 2003 and 5 January 2004. This is a traditionally quiet period and community hospital beds at the Haslemere site were closed at this time during 2000 and 2001. However, patients will be able to return to the hospitals at short notice if necessary.

County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals Trust

Mr. Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many North Durham patients chose to have operations carried out at Bishop Auckland hospital in the last 12 months; [144863]

(2) how many patients have been admitted to Bishop Auckland Hospital as a result of beds being unavailable at the University Hospital, Durham. [144865]

Miss Melanie Johnson: This information is not available centrally in the format required. The Department collects data on a trust wide basis. For the year 2002–03, County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals National Health Service Trust recorded 108,524 Finished Consultant Episodes.

Mr. Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients who are under the care of consultants in County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust have been treated in the private sector, and at what cost, in the last 12 months. [144864]

Miss Melanie Johnson: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the non-executive members of the County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust; and in which parliamentary constituency each lives. [144866]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The information is shown in the following table.

Board member	*Constituency*
Angela Ballatti (Chair)	City of Durham
Kathryn Larkin-Bramley	City of Durham
John Dixon	Bishop Auckland
Valerie Ward	North West Durham
Anthony Wolfe	Bishop Auckland
Charles Magee	Sedgefield

Mr. Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the costs were of establishing the County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust; and how much of these costs was associated with establishing management structures. [144867]

Miss Melanie Johnson: In establishing the County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals National Health Service Trust, no additional funding was provided to North Durham Healthcare NHS Trust and South Durham Healthcare NHS Trust. Costs, including those for transferring from two management structures to a single structure, were contained within trust budgets.

Influenza

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the impact on *(a)* public health and *(b)* NHS capacity of a new influenza strain entering the United Kingdom. [141703]

Miss Melanie Johnson: All strategic health authorities have developed stringent winter plans to cope with increased seasonal demand for health services. These set out escalation procedures, such as the opening of additional beds, in the event of increased pressure on the national health service.

Hospital trusts have also been preparing for winter by profiling elective activity through the year to ensure maximum availability of beds for the seasonal winter rise in emergency admissions.

Learning Services

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he has put in place for co-ordination between NHS Plus and the NHS University in the delivery of learning services to external health care providers. [145241]

Ms Rosie Winterton: NHS Plus is a completely separate service to the NHS University. NHS Plus is a network of 108 national health service trusts which delivers occupational health services to non-NHS employers, including non-NHS health care providers. It does not deliver learning services. The NHS University, on the other hand, is a new kind of educational institution which will provide learning programmes for all levels of staff who work for the NHS with a view to improving service delivery in health and social care and modernisation of the NHS.

LifeBytes

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the *(a)* content of and *(b)* links from the LifeBytes website's section on sex and relationships. [145318]

Miss Melanie Johnson: LifeBytes is part of the Wired for Health website: a series of websites managed by the Health Development Agency on behalf of the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills. LifeBytes provides information for young people on a range of health related issues such as healthy eating, physical activity, drugs alcohol and tobacco, as well as sex and relationships.

It is important that young people have access to information and know where to go for advice. The links from LifeBytes provide further sources of guidance.

Maintenance Backlog

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the backlog maintenance cost to reach *(a)* estate code condition B, *(b)* fire safety standards and *(c)* health and safety standards for (i) England, (ii) each strategic health authority and (iii) each NHS trust for the latest year for which figures are available. [143707]

Mr. Hutton: NHS Estates collects data on backlog maintenance from National Health Service trusts through its Estates Return Information Collection. The latest data, relating to 2002–03, is still the subject of statistical validation. I will write to the hon. Member with the information as soon as possible.

Mental Health (Drugs and Alcohol)

Helen Southworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the provision of specialist NHS services for people who are diagnosed as having a mental illness who also have a drug or alcohol dependency. [142770]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Government have not undertaken an assessment of specialised services for people diagnosed with a mental illness who also have a drug or alcohol dependency.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for compiling, analysing and disseminating information relating to United Kingdom economic, social and demographic statistics. Their report 'Psychiatric morbidity among adults living in private households, 2000' is available on the website at www.statistics.gov.uk. Along with others due for publication next year, the report contains valuable information about the prevalence of mental disorders including those with problems relating to substance misuse among adults over the age of 16 in private households.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many patients of mental health hospitals have been found in possession of illegal drugs while resident in the last year; and if he will make a statement; [145023]

(2) what measures he is taking to prevent the sale of illegal drugs to patients of mental health hospitals. [145057]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Guidance on the use of illegal substances in in-patient and day-care settings is being prepared and will be issued in early 2004.

The guidelines will support managers and clinicians in developing local policies promoting the safety of patients, staff and visitors and the effective care and treatment of patients who misuse substances.

The Counter Fraud and Security Management Service (CFSMS) was launched in April 2003 with a new remit encompassing policy and operational responsibility for the management of security in the national health service. The remit is broad but has been defined as protecting people and property. One of the key areas which the CFSMS will be addressing is ensuring the security of drugs, prescription forms and hazardous materials.

No central records are kept of number of patients who are caught misusing illegal substances.

Mental Health Services (Children and Adolescents)

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the impact of expenditure in the last five years on mental health services for children and adolescents. [145056]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department has made a significant investment in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) of some £105 million over the period 2000–03.

A number of positive outcomes have been reported including improved access to specialist services, the development of new services for groups that traditionally have found it difficult to access CAMHS and better support to other agencies. In particular, this additional investment has led to a significant increase in multi-disciplinary and joint working across professions and agencies, engaging key local players in the development of the service.

But this is only the first stage in a continuing programme of radical improvements in the quality and quantity of CAMHS. Our current public service agreement target provides for an expansion of the service by at least 10 per cent. per year for the next three years, leading to a comprehensive service, able to respond to all children with mental health needs in all areas, by 2006. This development is underpinned by over £250 million of additional funding, including £140 million for local authorities.

Mental Illness

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what groups he has assessed as being most at risk from and prone to mental illness resulting in them being a danger *(a)* to themselves and *(b)* to others. [144758]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Office for National Statistics survey "Psychiatric Morbidity Among Adults Living in Private Households, 2000" shows the association between the presence of mental health problems and key socio-demographic and economic characteristics for those with different types of mental disorder. It also examines the relationship between the presence of mental health problems and physical complaints. The survey is available from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/

In addition, the National Institute for Mental Health in England has recently published the first annual report of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England. The report, available from http://www.nimhe.org.uk, sets out risk factors for suicide and deliberate self-harm.

Information about factors associated with homicide by people with mental illness is also contained in the National Confidential Inquiry reports, which are available from http://www.national-confidential-inquiry.ac.uk/nic/

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many ex-offenders have in each of the last five years been *(a)* identified with and *(b)* treated for a mental illness sufficiently severe for them to have been regarded as a danger to themselves or others, broken down by region; [144759]

(2) how many people in each region, in each of the last five years, broken down by age, ethnicity and sex have been identified as a danger to *(a)* themselves and *(b)* others as a result of mental illness. [144761]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Information about people, whether or not they have a history of offending, who may represent a danger to themselves or others is not collected in the format requested.

However, statistical bulletin "In-patients formally detained in hospitals under the Mental Health Act 1983 and other legislation, England: 1992–93 to 2002–03" (http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0322.htm) contains detailed information on people detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 and other legislation.

The annual statistical bulletin "Statistics of mentally disordered offenders" (http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb1403.pdf) contains information about patients subject to a restriction order admitted to, detained in or discharged from hospitals. It also gives information on the admission to hospital of mentally disordered offenders not subject to restriction orders.

The Office for National Statistics survey "Psychiatric Morbidity Among Adults Living in Private Households, 2000" (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/) shows the associations between the presence of mental health problems and key socio-demographic and economic characteristics for those with different types of mental disorder. It also examines the relationship between the presence of mental health problems and physical complaints.

In addition, the National Institute for Mental Health in England has recently published the first annual report of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England. The report (http://www.nimhe.org.uk) sets out risk factors for suicide and deliberate self-harm.

Information about factors associated with suicide and homicide by people with mental illness is also contained in the National Confidential Inquiry reports, which are available from http://www.national-confidential-inquiry.ac.uk/nic/

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many young people leaving care have been *(a)* identified with and *(b)* treated for mental illness sufficiently severe for them to have been regarded as a danger to themselves or others, broken down by region. [144762]

Dr. Ladyman: This information is not collected centrally. As set out in the Department of Health Priorities and Planning Framework 2003–06, we are establishing a total of 50 early intervention teams to reduce the duration of untreated psychosis to an average time of less than three months (individual maximum less than six months). They will also provide support for the first three years for all young people who develop a first episode of psychosis by 2004.

The latest information available shows 27 early intervention teams are already in place. Work continues in assisting local services to establish teams in line with the service specifications outlined in the Mental Health Policy Implementation Guide.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources were made available *(a)* centrally and *(b)* by health authority for the treatment both on a residential and outpatient basis of people thought to be a danger to (i) themselves and (ii) others as a result of mental illness in each of the last five years. [144763]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Mental health resources made centrally available for dangerous and severe personality disorder, high secure services and prison in-reach since 2001–02 are detailed in the table.

millions

	Allocation
2001–02	11.05
2002–03	20.06
2003–04	25.067

Resource expenditure by health authorities/primary care trusts (PCTs) is not collected by client group and therefore the specific spend on services for people thought to be a danger to themselves and others as a result of mental illness cannot be separately identified.

Allocations to PCTs for mental health in 2003–04 have been in line with the planning and priorities framework, which is in turn based on the NHS Plan. Following "Shifting the Balance of Power", PCTs are responsible for commissioning services for their local populations. They do this in the context of national priorities; the local services that are already available; the evidence; and the resources. These arrangements permit resources to be more closely matched to the

needs of local people and enable PCTs and their partner organisations to take full account of strengths or gaps in local services.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many residential treatment facilities are open, broken down by region, for people identified with a serious mental illness; and how many facilities were in operation in each of the last five years. [144764]

Ms Rosie Winterton: This information is not available in the requested format. However, the hospital activity statistics system, which is available at http://www.doh.gov.uk/hospitalactivity/, provides information on the average daily numbers of available and occupied residential beds for people with mental illness within national health service organisations.

In addition, the National Care Standards Commission operates a central register of social care and private and voluntary health care services throughout England. The register includes residential care services for people with mental illness and is available at http://www.carestandards.org.uk/registered + services + directory/default.htm

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued to healthcare professionals when identifying and treating patients thought to be a danger to *(a)* themselves and *(b)* others as a result of mental illness; and how many attacks were made on healthcare professionals in the last 12 months, broken down by region. [144765]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department has issued advice on the identification and treatment of those patients thought to be a danger to themselves or others as a result of mental illness.

The first national suicide prevention strategy in England was launched by my right hon. Friend, the then Minister of State for Community (Jacqui Smith) on 16 September 2002 and the first report on progress, which is available at www.nimhw.org.uk, was published on 11 December 2003.

For those detained under the Mental Health Act, practice should follow what is described in the Mental Health Act Code of Practice. For those who may be a danger to others, control and restraint procedures should be regularly reviewed and audited in line with good clinical governance.

The Counter Fraud and Security Management Service (CFSMS), launched in April 2003, has a remit encompassing policy and operational responsibility for the management of security in the national health service. As a key preventative measure to tackle physical assaults on staff and professionals in the NHS, the CFSMS has developed a national syllabus for the provision of conflict resolution training for staff and professionals working in the NHS and is in the process of developing a separate national syllabus for the provision of conflict resolution and physical intervention training in the mental health and learning disability settings. The National Institute for Mental Health in England also has a programme of work on the management of violence in mental health settings.

The table shows the number of incidents indicated in the Department's survey of violence, accidents and harassment reports for 2002–03.

Organisation type	*Estimated total number of incidents*	*Estimated number of incidents per 1,000 staff per month*
Acute trusts	38,000	6
Primary care trusts	21,000	12
Ambulance trusts	5,000	16
Mental health and community trusts	51,000	34
All organisations	116,000	11

Totals include a small number of incidents in strategic health authorities and special health authorities. Totals have been estimated to include organisations which did not provide figures.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds were available in each type of facility, broken down by region, for the containment and treatment of individuals thought to be a danger to *(a)* themselves or *(b)* others as a result of mental illness in each of the last five years. [144766]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The requested data is not collected by client group and therefore the specific number of beds for people thought to be a danger to themselves and others as a result of mental illness cannot be separately identified.

Average daily numbers of available beds open overnight and residential care beds in the mental illness sector for each of the last five years are shown in the table.

	Beds open overnight	*Residential care beds*
1998–99	35,692	1,364
1999–2000	34,173	1,299
2000–01	34,214	1,280
2001–02	32,783	1,193
2002–03	32,753	1,633

Mindnseek Website

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the cost of the website www.mindnseek.net; and if he will make a statement. [144936]

Ms Rosie Winterton: It is not possible to give an estimated cost for the production of the 'Mindnseek' website as it was just one element of a broader online project with readthesigns.org, with a total cost of £70,000.

MRSA

Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish guidelines setting out the circumstances in which general practitioners can record MRSA as a secondary cause of death. [144021]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Guidance is already available and general practitioners, hospital doctors and coroners should include methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), or any other condition that they believe contributed to death, on the certificate of cause of death. Instructions on how to complete this are at the front of

every book of certificates. Doctors are expected to complete the certificate to the best of their knowledge and belief. If the doctor believes that MRSA contributed to the death he or she should write it in the appropriate part of the certificate and doctors do include MRSA on death certificates.

National Institute for Clinical Excellence

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the findings of the investigation into the implementation of National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance being undertaken will be published; [144122]

(2) which organisations have been formally consulted as part of the investigation into the implementation of National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance; [144123]

(3) what the scope of the investigation into the implementation of National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance is; [144124]

(4) who is leading the investigation into the implementation of National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance. [144125]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Professor Mike Richards, the National Cancer Director, is leading the investigation into the causes of the apparent variation in the uptake of cancer drugs approved by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence.

This work is at an early stage, but representatives from the national health service and pharmaceutical industry have already been consulted, together with the Cancer Taskforce, which includes representatives from the voluntary sector.

Findings are likely to be available in spring 2004.

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Government will put in place tracking mechanisms to monitor the implementation of NICE guidance. [144126]

Ms Rosie Winterton: We see a key role for the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection to monitor the implementation of National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance during the course of its reviews of national health service bodies. Strategic health authorities monitor the performance of primary care trusts and are also in a position to access progress on the implementation of NICE guidance.

NHS Contracts

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contracts his Department has awarded to KBR; the value of the contracts; and if he will estimate the total fees to date. [144946]

Mr. Hutton: Following a formal competitive procurement exercise, Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) were awarded a contract to provide professional programme management and planning services to the national programme for information technology in the National Health Service. The total fees paid from March 2003 to date are £5.8 million.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contracts have been awarded under the NHS National Programme for information technology. [144947]

Mr. Hutton: The national programme for information technology in the National Health Service focuses on the key developments that will make a significant difference to improving the patient experience and the delivery of care and services. There are four key deliverables: electronic appointment booking, an electronic care records service, an electronic prescribing service and an underpinning IT infrastructure. The following contracts have been awarded:

to British Telecom to set up and run the national NHS care records service, worth a total of £620 million over 10 years;

to Accenture as the local service provider (LSP) in the North East, worth a total of £1,099 million over 10 years;

to BT as the LSP for London, worth a total of £996 million over 10 years as the LSP in the North East and London clusters;

to SchlumbergerSema to provide core services for the national Electronic Booking System, valued at £64.5 million over five years.

The remaining three LSP contracts for the Southern, Eastern, North West and West Midlands clusters, and the national NHS network (N3) will be awarded in due course.

NHS Live

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that NHS Live 2004 is not used to communicate party political messages. [145221]

Mr. Hutton: NHS Live is a learning programme and event for national health service and social care staff, patients and stakeholders, designed to speed up the pace of healthcare improvement for patients. In line with other Department of Health corporate activity, NHS Live will not be party political.

Nurse Recruitment

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many international nurse recruitment agencies have failed to adhere to the code of practice on ethical recruitment; and how many such agencies NHS organisations have been instructed not to deal with. [144314]

Mr. Hutton: Of the agencies on the code of practice list, the Department has asked 17 agencies for further details of their recruitment activities to ensure that they are compliant with the code. To date, none has been removed from the list, as no breaches of the code have been identified.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list of nursing agencies which comply with the code of practice on ethical nursing recruitment. [144315]

Mr. Hutton: The Department has published a list of agencies which adhere to the code of practice on its website: www.doh.gov.uk/international-recruitment.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the *(a)* salary and *(b)* support costs of his Department's Director of International Recruitment for Health Services are in 2003–04. [144316]

Mr. Hutton: The former Director of International Recruitment left the post on 30 April 2002, on completion of her secondment.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which countries have made written representations to his Department regarding recruitment of nurses; and if he will make a statement. [144317]

Mr. Hutton: The Government has nurse recruitment agreements with Spain, the Philippines, India and Indonesia. A Memorandum of Understanding has recently been signed with the Government of South Africa.

Nursing and Midwifery Council

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish advice given to the Nursing and Midwifery Council regarding *(a)* the title of Registered Health Visitor, *(b)* the Register of Health Visitors and *(c)* the Third Register. [144340]

Mr. Hutton: Consultation responses by the Department on parts of the Nursing and Midwifery Council register and the existence, function and title of the third part are available in the Library.

Osteoporosis

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates the Department has made of the potential savings to be made by preventing osteoporotic fractures. [145633]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department has made no estimate of the potential savings to be made by preventing osteoporotic fractures rather than treating them.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) have been asked to draw up clinical guidelines for the national health service on prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. The guideline will refer to the work, update and extend the evidence base of previously published guidelines and technology appraisals and those currently under development where appropriate, including NICE clinical guidelines on assessment and prevention of falls. NICE is also conducting an appraisal of the clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness of prevention and treatment of osteoporosis treatments to give doctors the latest evidence based information on the most effective treatments.

Patients Forums

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the budget for each patients forum, broken down by *(a)* staff and *(b)* non-staffing costs. [144809]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health is resourced to support patients forums in England. It has contracted with not-for-profit voluntary sector organisations called forum support organisations to provide support services to patients forums. The details of those individual contracts are not available due to commercial confidentiality. The requirements for individual patients forums are agreed locally by each forum support organisation, taking into account the individual needs of that forum.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members each patients forum had at 1 December, broken down by *(a)* sex and *(b)* ethnicity. [144810]

Ms Rosie Winterton: At 1 December 2003 the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) had received over 5,000 applications from members of the public volunteering to become members of the 572 patients forums. Each forum requires seven members to operate and at 1 December 2003, 498 forums had seven or more volunteers.

The information requested broken down by sex and ethnicity is not currently available. However the CPPIH will be analysing the demographic profile of all patients forums as part of its work to ensure that forums reflect their local communities.

Perinatal Pathologists

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the vacancy rates for perinatal pathologists in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region in each year since 1997. [144950]

Mr. Hutton: The Department of Health does not collect data on perinatal pathology. Perinatal pathology is a sub specialty of histopathology.

Pharmacy Services

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital trusts have antibiotic pharmacists in post; and what the cost is in each case. [145044]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis it was decided that a threshold of 15,000 square metres should be used to determine which shopping developments should be exempt from full entry requirements in relation to his Department's proposals for the deregulation of pharmacy services. [145228]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The object in choosing shopping developments of 15,000 square metres or more was to include developments which currently attract many consumers but which may have limited retail pharmacy provision.

If a development provides relatively self-contained facilities (that is, shoppers visit retail outlets in that development but tend not to venture into adjacent local neighbourhoods) the current Regulations impose restrictions on competition and access to national health service services by people choosing to visit the development.

Exempting such pharmacies will offer the prospect of immediate improvements in access to pharmaceutical services at a time and place which patients and consumers choose with the impact—if any—on existing pharmacies diluted over a wide geographic area.

The consultation document, 'Proposals to Reform and Modernise the NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1992', was published on 29 August 2003, with the consultation period running until 21 November

2003. An advisory group has been set up to consider how best to implement the reforms. The group is currently reviewing the responses to the consultation and is due to report to Ministers shortly.

Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine

Sandra Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation will meet *(a)* to review the clinical trials and *(b)* to decide on a policy on whether to include the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine into the childhood immunisation programme; [142971]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on incidences of disease in adults in the USA of routine infant pneumococcal immunisation; and what plans he has for such routine immunisation. [142975]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The clinical trials are assessing:

the level of protection that the vaccine offers infants in the United Kingdom;

the optimal schedule of this vaccine in infants;

whether there is a need for a booster dose of vaccine in the second year of life to maintain protection; and the impact that introducing this vaccine to the childhood schedule has on the level of protection given by the other vaccines.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will meet to review the clinical trials as soon as they have been completed.

The independent expert advisory body, the JCVI, is currently examining the evidence of the potential benefits of introducing pneumococcal conjugate vaccine to the infant immunisation schedule. What is clear is that there are many uncertainties in the evidence, in particular in measuring the burden of pneumococcal disease, and the amount of disease that is expected to be prevented by a vaccine in both the short and longer term because it protects against only seven of the numerous strains of pneumococcus.

Research is being undertaken to try to answer the questions, and the JCVI is assessing the evidence as it develops.

Encouraging data is emerging from the United States on the impact the conjugate vaccine has had on reducing pneumococcal disease both in the children immunised and also in adults. The JCVI is assessing the evidence as it develops.

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the comparative costs of *(a)* vaccinating children against pneumococcal disease and *(b)* treating the disease and its complications. [143019]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Studies are in place to assess the cost effectiveness of introducing pneumococcal vaccine into the childhood immunisation schedule by investigating the burden of pneumococcal disease in the United Kingdom and how much of this is vaccine preventable. The ongoing studies take into account the cost of treating the disease and its complications.

What is clear is that there are many uncertainties in the evidence, in particular in measuring the burden of pneumococcal disease, and in the amount of disease that is expected to be prevented by a vaccine in both the short and longer term because it protects against only seven of the numerous strains of pneumococcus.

Prescriptions

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average cost of NHS prescriptions has been in each of the last six years; and how much of this was recouped by prescription charges. [144143]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The available information is shown in the tables.

Number of prescription items, Net Ingredient Cost (NIC), and average NIC per item of all drugs dispensed in the community in England, 1997–98 to 2002–03

	Number of prescription items (millions)	Net Ingredient Cost (£ millions)	Average NIC per item (£)
1997–98	504.57	4,464.86	8.85
1998–99	516.34	4,799.46	9.30
1999–2000	534.12	5,435.18	10.18
2000–01	561.37	5,651.31	10.07
2001–02	591.87	6,281.07	10.61
2002–03	624.38	7,018.56	11.24

Income from prescription charges, England, 1997–98 to 2002–03

	£ million
1997–98	320.9
1998–99	341.3
1999–2000	366.7
2000–01	388.7
2001–02	407.5
2002–03	423.0

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* free and *(b)* chargeable NHS prescriptions have been given in each of the last six years. [144150]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The available information is shown in the tables.

Number of prescription items of all drugs dispensed in the community in England, 1997–98 to 2002–03 (million)

	Community pharmacists and appliance contractors only		
	Total charged	Total exempt	Total
1997–98	67	392	458.49
1998–99	68	402	469.80
1999–2000	73	413	485.84
2000–01	76	434	509.40
2001–02	79	459	537.64
2002–03	81	486	567.42

All dispensed items (community pharmacists and appliance contractors, and dispensing doctors) (million)

	Total charged	Total exempt	Total
2001–02	86	506	591.87
2002–03	89	535	624.38

Notes:
1. Total charged includes 'charge at point of dispensing' and 'prepayment certificates'.
2. Total exempt includes 'exempt and NHS Low Income Scheme', 'no charge contraceptives' and 'personally administered' drugs.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what protocols written by his Department govern incentives received by *(a)* general practitioners and *(b)* other prescribing staff to prescribe certain prescriptions; how compliance with these protocols is monitored; and if he will make a statement. [144939]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Primary care trusts (PCTs) in England may run prescribing incentive schemes to encourage the quality and cost-effectiveness of prescribing in general practice. Incentive payments generated through such schemes should be used for the benefit of the patients.

We expect PCTs to develop protocols to suit local circumstances and to monitor their effectiveness.

Prisoners

Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responsibility the Commission for Health Improvement has for *(a)* prisoners' and *(b)* ex-offenders' health care. [144070]

Mr. Hutton: The Commission for Health Improvement is responsible for conducting reviews and investigations of health care for which national health service bodies or service providers have responsibility. This responsibility encompasses the review or investigation of health services for prisoners where these are commissioned or provided by primary care trusts.

Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the NHS primary care and hospital treatments complaints procedure extends to health care provided in prison. [144521]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The national health service complaints procedure does not currently extend to health care provided in prison. However, with the forthcoming transfer of prison health commissioning responsibility from the Prison Service to the NHS, prisoners will have access to the NHS complaints process where services are commissioned by the NHS.

Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether targets for follow-up treatment for mental health patients extend to women with histories of self-harm leaving custody. [144538]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The "National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness" recommended that all discharged in-patients who have severe mental illness or a recent history of deliberate self-harm should be followed up within one week.

This recommendation applies to people in prison who have been receiving care from specialist mental health services for any mental health problem, including self-harm.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the services he makes available to prisoners aged over 65 years. [145631]

Dr. Ladyman: All prisons and their local national health service partners undertake regular joint assessments of prisoners' health needs and are responsible for providing, through local delivery plans, any additional services that may be required to meet unmet need identified during the assessment process.

The Department of Health and the Home Office have commissioned, for completion in spring 2004, a health strategy for older prisoners. This will include recommendations on the location and type of residential accommodation needed by older prisoners, the nature of the prison regime, and individual healthcare planning and throughcare arrangements. It will also identify the core principles that should apply to the management of older prisoners throughout their period in custody, including the transfer to residential or nursing homes of prisoners with degenerative diseases.

Psychiatrists

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* rate and *(b)* number of vacancies for consultant psychiatrists in (i) England and (ii) each strategic health authority in each of the last six years. [144291]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested has been placed in the Library. Vacancy rates have only been collected by the Department since March 1999. For March 1999 to 2000 data was collected for the whole psychiatry group only. From 2001 to 2003, data is available by psychiatric speciality. These data have been provided by health authority and regional office from 1999 to 2001 and by strategic health authority and Government office from March 2002.

School Nurses

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each *(a)* strategic health authority and *(b)* primary care trust the number of school nurses in each year since 1996. [144787]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each *(a)* strategic health authority and *(b)* primary care trust the three month vacancy figures for school nurses in each year since 1996. [144788]

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many school nurses are employed in each primary care trust. [145022]

Mr. Hutton: To date, information on the three month vacancy rate and the number of school nurses has not been collected centrally.

This information will be available in the future. The September 2003 census and the March 2004 Vacancy Survey will include data on school nurses.

Security Passes

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in his Department in the last 12 months. [144593]

Ms Rosie Winterton: From the records available, we estimate that about 110 Department of Health headquarters building photo passes have been lost or stolen in the period 17 October to 16 December 2003.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to promote a long-term public health education programme on how to reduce the risk of skin cancer; [145142]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of the SunSmart Campaign; and whether further funding will be provided to continue the campaign. [145143]

Miss Melanie Johnson: For details of the SunSmart campaign and wider plans to increase the profile of skin cancer and methods of effective sun protection I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Tamworth (Brian Jenkins) on 9 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 371–72W.

The effectiveness of the SunSmart campaign is being evaluated. The lessons learnt will be fed into future development of the campaign and will inform decisions on funding.

Smallpox Vaccination

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people *(a)* the Department would like to see vaccinated and *(b)* have so far been vaccinated against smallpox as part of the Government's plans; and if he will make a statement. [144942]

Mr. Hutton: I refer the hon. Member to the written statement of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 125WS. The smallpox plan requires that each standard Government region should have a regional response group, consisting of five response teams, each comprised of five members. In England, this requires 261 people to be vaccinated. That target has been reached and exceeded. In addition, a target of 90 ambulance staff to be vaccinated has been set for England.

Smoking

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on banning smoking in public places; and what plans he has to propose legislation on this topic. [143720]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Government has consistently said that smoke-free places are the ideal. We have also said that we do not think a universal ban on smoking in all public places is justified while we can make fast and substantial progress in partnership with industry. Over the years we have seen real increases in smoke-free workplaces. In 1996, 40 per cent. of people reported their workplace as being completely smoke-free. The latest figures for 2002 show this has risen to 50 per cent. We look forward to faster and more substantial progress from employers and businesses.

Speech and Language Therapists

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the ratio of speech and language therapists to the population was in England in each year since 1993. [144542]

Mr. Hutton: Information on the number of qualified speech and language therapists per 100,000 population is shown in the table. Between 1997 and 2002, the headcount ratio has increased from 10 to 12.

NHS Qualified scientific, therapeutic and technical staff within the speech and language therapy area of work and rate per 100,000 of the population, 1993–2002

	staff inpost		*rate per 100,000 of population*	
	Whole-time Equivalent	*headcount*	*whole-time equivalent*	*headcount*
2002	4,365	5,960	9	12
2001	4,207	5,685	9	12
2000	4,066	5,430	8	11
1999	3,939	5,185	8	11
1998	3,831	5,031	8	10
1997	3,742	4,871	8	10
1996	3,585	4,705	7	10
1995	3,354	4,335	7	9
1994	3,344	4,076	7	8
1993	3,469	4,201	7	9

Notes:
Figures are rounded to the nearest whole number
Source:
Department of Health Non-Medical Workforce Census
ONS Population Census

Suicide

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the national suicide prevention strategy. [144760]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) published the first annual report of its suicide prevention programme on 11 December 2003. It sets out progress made so far and further action that needs to be taken in the medium and longer term. The report incorporates suicide rates for the year 2002, the most recent available, which show that the number of suicides is at the lowest rate recorded. An electronic version of the report is available at http://www.nimhe.org.uk/downloads/78129-DoH-SuicidePrevention.pdf. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Tinnitus

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list research projects on tinnitus funded by his Department in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [144029]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Details of research projects on tinnitus funded by, or of interest to, the national health service are available on the national research register (NRR) at www.doh.gov.uk/research/nrr.htm. The NRR currently contains details of six on-going and 26 completed projects on tinnitus.

The Medical Research Council (MRC) funds research on hearing, some of which would be relevant to tinnitus. Figures for MRC spend on hearing research are available for the years shown in the table:

	£ million
2001–02	3.94
2000–01	4.96
1999–2000	3.34
1998–99	3.49
1997–98	3.23

The MRC always welcomes high quality applications from the scientific community for support for research into any aspect of human health, including tinnitus, and these are judged in open competition with other demands on funding.

Transplants

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he intends primary care trusts to use the guidance set out in the Transplant Framework for England, Saving Lives, Valuing Donors, to tackle organ donation among ethnic minorities. [144894]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department continues to explore concerns about the relatively low rate of organ donation with ethnic minority communities. The South Asian Campaign was launched in February 1999 specifically to raise awareness within the South Asian community which is prone to kidney disease. A campaign launched in 2002 is targeting the black community, which has similar problems. The Department also funded the National Kidney Research Fund to explore methods of raising awareness in local ethnic minority communities. Primary care trusts will be able to build on these programmes to develop and monitor local initiatives.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes have been made to transplant services since 2001. [145425]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Since 2001 the Department has provided around £7 million via UK Transplant to boost organ donation through the employment of

35 donor liaison nurses working with staff in critical units to help identify potential donors;

23 living donor co-ordinators working with families considering live donation;

10 non-heartbeating programmes to increase the number of organs from non-heartbeating donors.

The number of transplants taking place since 2001 has increased. In 2002–03 the changes led to 6 per cent. more kidney transplants; 6 per cent. more liver transplants; 12 per cent. more cornea transplants; and 5 per cent. more thoracic transplants.

But it is not only Government which saves lives through transplantation. "Saving Lives, Valuing Donors"—A Transplant Framework for England, published on 7 July 2003, identifies the part the Government, individuals, the national health service and other stakeholders can play in:

encouraging people to donate organs and tissues;

raising the quality and effectiveness of transplant services;

improving the clinical outcomes and quality of life of people who receive an organ or tissue transplant;

increasing the supply of viable organs and tissues for transplantation.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure there is a transplant co-ordinator in every hospital. [145426]

Ms Rosie Winterton: All hospitals with transplant services have recipient transplant co-ordinators in post to care for those patients who receive transplants.

In addition, there are currently 100 donor co-ordinators based in 21 teams across the United Kingdom and there are 35 donor liaison nurses who are part of the donor co-ordinator team based in intensive care units.

West Sussex Social Care NHS Trust

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by the West Sussex Social Care NHS trust on funding nurses to travel to Australia; and what the purpose of their visits was. [145006]

Ms Rosie Winterton: In line with our policy on "Shifting the Balance of Power", responsibility for local services now rests with local national health service trusts. In the same way continuing professional development and post-registration training needs for all NHS health care staff are determined locally through skills auditing of teams against priority local needs and through the appraisal process.

I am informed by the Surrey and Sussex Strategic Health Authority that two senior nurses attended the 14th International Symposium for the Psychological Treatment of Schizophrenia in Melbourne to present a paper on early intervention into psychosis, and to acquire and share knowledge and good practice.

In addition to the conference itself there were also visits to assertive outreach and early intervention services.

The hotel bills and airfare came to £3,000 and were purchased through Hourds who are on the national contract. There were also subsistence expenses of around £200 each.

Working Time Directive

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the overtime needed in each NHS trust arising from the implementation of the Working Time Directive. [141404]

Mr. Hutton: The organisation and delivery of services is a matter for individual trusts. The national health service has been aware of the implications of implementing the Working Time Directive for doctors in training since 1998, and planning for it forms part of overall NHS planning.

Strategic health authorities are currently ensuring that plans will achieve compliance by 2004.

Gregory Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the cost of implementing the EU working time directive for each *(a)* NHS hospital trust and *(b)* primary care trust in England. [142394]

Mr. Hutton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 790W.

Wigs

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to end payments for wigs for chemotherapy patients in England. [145149]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Our policy is to give priority to helping people who may have difficulty in paying charges, rather than extending the exemption arrangements. We have no plans to change the current charging arrangements. However, people receiving certain benefits or tax credits do not have to pay. Those who would otherwise have to pay may seek help through the National Health Service Low Income Scheme.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 6 January 2004

TRANSPORT

Bus Services

12. **Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the role of his Department in the dissemination of best practice on bus services. [145876]

Mr. McNulty: The Department for Transport plays an active role in disseminating good practice in the bus sector, both alone and in partnership with other stakeholders in the industry and local authorities. Recent examples include a "Good Practice Guide on rural bus service provision" and revised guidance on "Protecting Bus and Coach Crews".

Transport Schemes

13. **Paul Farrelly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance his Department gives to local government in respect of formulating bids for *(a)* light rail and *(b)* other transport schemes. [145877]

Mr. McNulty: We are always happy to discuss with local authorities, without prejudice, emerging proposals for light rail and other local transport schemes, and to explain what information will be required to support any bids for funding. A manual of guidance on our appraisal methodology is also available.

Speed Cameras

14. **Mr. Flook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the *(a)* amount of and *(b)* uses of revenue from speed cameras. [145878]

Mr. Jamieson: The latest audited figures are for the year 2000–01, in which £8.6 million of speeding fine receipts was passed to seven safety camera partnerships, and for 2001–02 in which £11.4 million was passed to 14 safety camera partnerships in England and Wales. In those two years £1.2 million and £4.3 million respectively, was returned to the Treasury.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money raised in fines from speed cameras during the last year for which records are available was spent in *(a)* Billericay and District, *(b)* Basildon and District and *(c)* Essex; and how that money was spent. [145792]

Mr. Jamieson: In 2001–02 the Essex Safety Camera Partnership claimed £3,003,763 to cover the costs of purchasing and operating cameras in their area which includes Billericay and Basildon, for which separate figures are not available.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was raised in fines from speed cameras in the last year for which records are available in *(a)* Billericay and District, *(b)* Basildon and District and *(c)* Essex. [145793]

Mr. Jamieson: In 2001–02 £3,524,120 in conditional offer fixed penalties was collected by the Essex Safety Camera Partnership which includes Billericay and Basildon, for which separate figures are not available.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many speed cameras *(a)* there are and *(b)* there have been in each of the last five years in (i) Billericay and District, (ii) Basildon and District and (iii) Essex [145794]

Mr. Jamieson: The Essex Safety Camera Partnership covers all of Essex and includes Billericay and Basildon. The number of fixed camera sites are shown in the following table.

	Fixed camera added	*Total sites*
Pre-1999	20	20
1999	8	28
2000	0	28
2001	28	56
2002	9	65
2003	17	82

In addition, six mobile camera units work at approximately 300 locations in Essex.

School Transport

15. **Mr. Simon Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on making the wearing of seat belts on school transport compulsory. [145879]

Mr. Jamieson: None. The Department is however in the process of implementing EU Directive 2003/20/EU of 8 April 2003 on seat belt wearing. This requires the wearing of seat belts by passengers in buses and coaches where they are installed.

Train Punctuality

16. **Mr. Cameron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest statistics on train punctuality. [145380]

Mr. McNulty: Performance figures published by the Strategic Rail Authority on 11 December showed that year on year performance was up 0.5 per cent. to the end of September 2003. We are putting in funding to reverse the decades of under-investment and improve reliability. Early indications are that performance this autumn has been significantly better than in 2002.

A303

17. **Mr. Liddell-Grainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the dualling of the A303. [145881]

Mr. Jamieson: We are hoping to reach a decision on the route choice for the A303 improvement west of Ilminster in the spring after we have received the comments of the Regional Assembly on the Highways Agency's further work.

Airport Capacity (South-East)

18. **Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent he proposes details of development at airports in the south-east of England under "The Future of Air Transport" White Paper should remain a matter of local determination through the planning system. [145882]

Mr. McNulty: I refer the hon. Member to the Aviation White Paper which says that it is for owners and operators to bring forward airport development proposals which will need to be considered through the planning system in the normal way.

Cycling

19. **Mrs. Calton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's strategy for *(a)* increasing cycling journey numbers and *(b)* reducing cycling injuries and deaths. [145883]

Mr. McNulty: We are improving cycling infrastructure and, having initiated the Cycling Projects Fund, we have given over £4 million for local cycling facilities and training. On the safety front, we are promoting training and measures which cyclists can take to protect themselves, such making themselves conspicuous. We are also improving training and testing for motorists.

Aviation Industry

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of varying levels of aviation capacity on the competitiveness of the UK's international trade. [145736]

Mr. McNulty: Assessments of the impact of the growth in the aviation industry in increasing productivity growth across the economy were made by Oxford Economic Forecasting ("The Contribution of the Aviation Industry to the UK Economy", November 1999). However, the appraisal of airport development options made in the regional air transport consultation documents focus on the direct benefits to passengers of increased airport capacity. No estimates were made of wider economic benefits to the economy arising from factors such as improvements in the UK's competitiveness, but the potential effect of additional airport capacity on productivity across the economy can be gauged from the resulting increase in business passengers and air freight activity.

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the effects of the growth in aviation-related employment on other employment sectors. [145737]

Mr. McNulty: Assessments of the contribution of aviation to employment growth in other sectors of the economy have been undertaken by Oxford Economic Forecasting ("The Contribution of the Aviation Industry to the UK Economy", November 1999) and by ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd. ("The Local and Regional Economic Impacts of the Expansion of Regional Air Services", January 2001). "The Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom: North of England" consultation document included material from these studies on aviation-related employment.

Birmingham New Street Station

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he has had with the Strategic Rail Authority regarding possible refurbishment of Birmingham New Street Station; and if he will make a statement; [145377]

(2) what discussions he has had with Network Rail regarding possible closures of Birmingham New Street Station during peak times; and if he will make a statement. [145378]

Mr. McNulty: I understand that in the short term, Network Rail is developing a plan to continue to manage passenger capacity efficiently while improving passenger circulation at Birmingham New Street. The Strategic Rail Authority and Network Rail are also working together and with local and regional stakeholders to continue the safe and efficient operation of the station, and to develop a series of station capacity and infrastructure enhancements to improve its environment. This will ensure that the predicted substantial growth in demand for rail services in the region in the medium to longer term can be addressed.

Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in completing the Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study; and what estimate he has made of the likely completion date. [145226]

Mr. McNulty: The study, which was commissioned to address the concerns of Bath and North East Somerset Council and the South West Regional Assembly over the proposed de-trunking of the A36/A46, has been further delayed because it has taken longer than anticipated for the consultants to complete the modelling and firm up their conclusions. It is now anticipated that the revised Final Reports will be cleared by the Steering Group by late January 2004. Once approved, they will be submitted to the South West Regional Assembly for comment and possibly additional brief consultation with their partners, in particular regarding the de-trunking issue which gave rise to the study being commissioned.

Following receipt of the study report and comments from the Regional Assembly, I will be in a position to make a response.

Congestion Charging

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the use of satellite technology for congestion charging. [145381]

Mr. Jamieson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport made a statement to the House on 9 July 2003, *Official Report*, columns 1175–95, announcing a feasibility study into the potential for road charging in the UK, which is expected to report this summer. The Terms of Reference were published on 9 July in "Managing our Roads", which is available on my Department's website.

Heathrow Airport

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department made of the need to widen major roads into and out of Heathrow, in the event of a third runway at Heathrow being built. [145447]

Mr. McNulty: The South East and East of England Regional Air Services Study (SERAS) included an assessment of the road and rail infrastructure enhancements that would be needed to support a third runway at Heathrow. The results of this appraisal were summarised in Chapter 7 of "The Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom: South East" consultation document.

The White Paper, "The Future of Air Transport", recognised that the further expansion of Heathrow will place pressure on already congested road and rail networks. It stated that the Government have no plans for further motorway widening in this area beyond that which we announced in our response to the Thames Valley and Orbit multi-modal studies in July 2003, and that the solution would need to be based on improvements to public transport.

North Downs Tunnel

Jonathan Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the thickness was of the invert of the North Downs Tunnel approved by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act 1996; and what change there has been in the specification. [145977]

Mr. McNulty: The Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act 1996 contains no specifications of the tunnel lining thickness. The specifications relating to such details in the North Downs Tunnel were first drawn up later. The tunnel has a concrete lining with a relatively flat invert and reinforced concrete base slab, which supports the ballasted track. The concrete is about 1 metre thick in the invert and the average ballast thickness is 600 mm.

Railways (Disabled Access)

Mr. Norman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received from the Strategic Rail Authority concerning the ability of railway stations to conform to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. [145089]

Mr. McNulty: The SRA is considering how best to prioritise a programme of works to meet the accessibility requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and will be consulting on draft criteria this year.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether the Strategic Rail Authority will be liable for prosecution if railways do not have disabled access by the required date in 2004. [145403]

Mr. McNulty: With effect from 1 October 2004, providers of services will be under new duties to take reasonable steps to ensure that a disabled person can make use of a service, pursuant to section 21(2)(a)-(c) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Section 19(2)(b) of the Act defines a provider of services as being a person concerned with the provision in the United Kingdom of services to the public or a section of the public. Interpretation is a matter for the courts, but the Strategic Rail Authority's assessment is that the section 21 duties will apply to train operating companies that lease stations, and to Network Rail in respect of the stations it operates itself.

The SRA is working with the rail industry and disabled people to ensure a more accessible transport network, with the greatest possible choice for disabled people within the available resources.

Road Crossings

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he has recently issued to local authorities on the number of road crossings to help people who are *(a)* disabled and *(b)* partially sighted; and if he will make a statement. [145379]

Mr. McNulty: Local Transport Notes 1/95 and 2/95 cover the general assessment and design of road crossings, respectively. The latter includes guidance on installing audible and tactile signals to help disabled pedestrians at signalled crossings. In addition, we have issued specific guidance on meeting the needs of disabled people, including blind and partially sighted people, in "Guidance on the Use of Tactile Surfaces" (1999) and "Inclusive Mobility" (2002).

Traffic Calming

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths he estimates have resulted from delay caused by speed humps and traffic calming preventing the emergency services reaching emergency incidents since 2000. [145822]

Mr. Jamieson: The Department has received no evidence that speed humps cause additional deaths.

Transport Infrastructure (South Bedfordshire)

Andrew Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of planned future house building on the transport infrastructure of South Bedfordshire. [145873]

Mr. McNulty: The London to South Midlands Multi-Modal Study took account of the likely scale of growth that is now proposed in the Milton Keynes South Midlands draft strategy. Following the multi-modal study we were able to add three major schemes which serve South Bedfordshire to the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

CABINET OFFICE

Government Information and Communication Service

25. **Norman Baker**: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much has been allocated this financial year to the Government Information and Communication Service. [145861]

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Government Information and Communication Service Centre in the Cabinet Office for the current financial year is £2,458,395.

Members of the GICS as a whole are employed and their work funded by individual Departments. The overall figures are not collected centrally.

Better Regulation

26. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many personnel are working on the better regulation brief in the department. [145862]

Mr. Alexander: The Regulatory Impact Unit leads on the better regulation agenda in my Department. The unit had 58 full-time equivalent staff as at December 2003.

Internet Use

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what proportion of internet users have transacted with a government department online in each year since 1997; and what steps are being taken to increase this proportion. [146132]

Mr. Alexander: The Office for National Statistics (ONS) measures the use of e-government services on a quarterly basis. Currently 8 per cent. of internet users claim to have transacted with government online, where transaction is defined as submitting a form, making a payment or booking an appointment. Many more visit web sites for information—50 per cent. of the internet population. These figures are based on a question recently added to the ONS Omnibus Survey and data exists for 2003 only.

To improve the take-up of online services the Cabinet Office is working with departments to ensure that online services become more focussed around customer needs rather than following the structure of government. An enhanced customer offering for the delivery of electronic services will also be piloted which will present, service information in a consistent useable way clustered around topics and audience groups.

Correspondence

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office when he will respond to the correspondence to his Department containing the Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Trust's Legacy Project study. [144453]

Mr. Alexander: I have written to the organisation concerned today.

I responded to the Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Trust on 30 December 2003.

Public Appointments

27. **Ian Stewart:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps the Government take to ensure that people appointed to public bodies are representative of the society that they serve. [145863]

Mr. Alexander: This Government want boards of public bodies to be representative of society as a whole. On 17 December, we published Delivering Diversity in Public Appointments 2003. This outlines the Government's commitment to achieving greater diversity in public appointments. It includes action plans for individual Departments, together with targets to be achieved by 2006.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list vacancies for posts on public bodies which have been advertised since 2001, indicating in such case the number of *(a)* posts, *(b)* applicants, *(c)* persons interviewed and *(d)* appointments made. [145277]

Mr. Alexander: This information is not held centrally. Individual departments are responsible for making appointments to their own public bodies.

The Government is committed to ensuring greater access to public appointments. A new public appointments vacancy web-site (www.publicappts-vacs.gov.uk) was launched by my Department on 27 March 2003. This provides information about current and forthcoming vacancies, helping people to find details of the appointments that are of most interest to them.

Public Bodies

Andrew George: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will list all regional *(a)* advisory non-departmental public bodies, *(b)* executive non-departmental public bodies and *(c)* other autonomous public bodies, identifying those which are related to health, broken down by region; if he will indicate those which have been created since 1 May 1997; and if he will list those bodies which have been (i) abolished since 1 May 1997 and (ii) abolished but whose functions have been transferred to other public bodies. [145955]

Mr. Alexander: Information about non-departmental public bodies is contained in "Public Bodies 2003", and previous years' editions, copies of which are available in the House Libraries, and on the Cabinet Office website at http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/agencies-publicbodies/publicbodies/index.shtm

The information is not broken down to regional level, nor are creation or abolition dates of bodies separately identified. This level of detail could be provided only at disproportionate expense. Public bodies related to health are primarily listed in the entry for the Department of Health, though some public bodies attached to other Departments (e.g. the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) also deal with health-related issues.

TREASURY

Correspondence

David Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will reply to the letter of 11 November from the

hon. Member for Walsall, North concerning the statement by members of the Royal Commission on Long Term Care. [144854]

Mr. Boateng: I have done so.

Departmental Policies (Regent's Park and Kensington, North)

Ms Buck: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of his policies on the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington, North since 1997. [145421]

Mr. Boateng: Over the past five years, the Government have built a platform of economic stability and sound management of public finances, delivering benefits across the UK, including in London and the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington North.

The UK is now enjoying the longest period of sustained low inflation since the 1960s, with long-term interest rates around their lowest levels since that time. Since spring 1997, employment has increased by almost 1.7 million, and public investment increases, including the biggest ever sustained growth in the history of the NHS, are tackling the legacy of under-investment in public services.

Employment Incentives

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an assessment of *(a)* provision for young, single, working adults on low incomes and *(b)* incentives for those aged under 25 to move off benefits into employment. [144534]

Dawn Primarolo: To help young people move off benefits and into employment, the Government have introduced the New Deal for Young People, increased financial incentives to work through the National Minimum Wage and the reduction in the starting rate of income tax from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. and improved opportunities to participate in training and education, for example through the Modern Apprenticeships scheme.

Forward Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many forward contracts have been granted to individuals and corporations *(a)* domiciled and *(b)* non-domiciled in the UK. [142719]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue have identified 17 cases where forward contracts have been granted. In two instances the agreements related to individuals or companies domiciled in the UK; the other 15 cases related to individuals or companies non-domiciled in the UK.

The Inland Revenue no longer make these agreements.

Growth

Bob Spink: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the increase in forecast growth he estimates results from increases in public spending for each of the next three years. [145162]

Mr. Boateng: Table A4, on page 182 of pre-Budget report 2003 (Cm 6042), presents information on the contributions to forecast GDP growth from expenditure components, including government spending, between 2003 and 2006.

IR35

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional revenue has been secured from investigations under the IR35 regulation *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each year since its implementation. [145747]

Dawn Primarolo: Establishing whether or not the intermediaries legislation applies is undertaken as part of the Inland Revenue's Employer Compliance Review programme. As such it is not possible with any accuracy to isolate data relating solely to this legislation.

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the *(a)* administration and *(b)* employment costs arising from pursuing investigations under IR35 regulation. [145748]

Dawn Primarolo: There is no data held on administration and employment costs relating solely to this legislation.

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many investigations under the IR35 regulation have *(a)* been initiated, *(b)* resulted in additional revenue and *(c)* been concluded without securing additional revenue. [145749]

Dawn Primarolo: Establishing whether or not the intermediaries legislation applies is undertaken as part of the Inland Revenue's Employer Compliance Review programme. As such it is not possible with any accuracy to isolate data relating solely to this legislation.

Spirits Seizures

Mr. Alan Reid: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and *(b)* other spirits were seized by Customs and Excise in the last 12 months because duty had not been paid. [145973]

John Healey: The information is not available in the format requested. HM Customs and Excise central records collate the volume of spirit seized but do not distinguish the specific type of spirit.

Details of the volume of spirits seized for this period will be included in HM Customs and Excise Annual Report and Accounts for 2003–04.

Details of spirits seizures in the period 2001–02 are given in Appendix C of the HM Customs and Excise Annual Report 2002–03 (HC 52).

Mr. Alan Reid: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful prosecutions there have been for evading duty on *(a)* whisky and *(b)* other spirits in the last 12 months. [145974]

John Healey: The information is not available in the format requested. HM Customs and Excise central records collate the number of successful and unsuccessful prosecutions which involve spirits duty fraud but do not distinguish the specific type of spirit for which a prosecution is brought.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tetra Communications System

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations she has received regarding the effect of the Tetra communications system on terrestrial television reception; from which areas representations have been received; and if she will make a statement. [144670]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Ofcom is aware of instances of interference to domestic installations from Airwave radio base stations. Airwave is the new police/public safety radio communications system currently being rolled out across the country. In all the instances so far investigated the consumers own masthead aerial amplifier, used to boost weak signals has had a pass-band wide enough to boost the television signal and, inadvertently, the unwanted radiocommunications signal.

Testing has shown that the Tetra transmitters were operating correctly and within their designated licence parameters. In most cases a suitable filter fitted between the masthead amplifier and the TV aerial will resolve the interference and affected residents have been advised to have such filters fitted to their TV installations. As a goodwill gesture Airwave has arranged for filters to be fitted to the affected television installations in certain circumstances. The problem however is with the TV aerial amplifiers or the aerial system. Consumers should take problems up with their suppliers.

BNFL

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what the total costs of BNFL's business operations in the United States were in each of the last five years; [142133]

(2) what the total revenue generated by BNFL as a result of business activities in the United States was in each of the last five years; [142134]

(3) how many business contracts BNFL has agreed in the United States in each of the last five years. [142135]

Mr. Timms: BNFL operates in several sectors in the US, principally environmental clean-up through its subsidiary BNFL Inc and fuel manufacture and reactor services through its subsidiary Westinghouse Electric Company. In BNFL's annual report and accounts, Note 2 identifies the sales and profit for the group arising from America (North and South combined). In 2002–03 the total sales arising from America were £747 million, and the profit before tax and exceptional items was £59 million.

Following is a table that shows BNFL's sales and profit figures going back five years (for North and South America combined):

£ million

	Sales	*Profit*
2002–03	747	59
2001–02	830	(11)
2000–01	945	(27)
1999–2000	73	(7)
1998–99	74	n/a

Note:
Drawn from Annual Report & Accounts.

Business Premises

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many statutory inspections of business premises took place in each of the last five years. [145231]

Nigel Griffiths: There is no central database for inspections.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many statutory inspections carrying a right to entry onto business premises were carried out in each year since 1997. [145232]

Nigel Griffiths: There is no central database for inspections.

Carbon Reduction Targets

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the carbon reduction targets outlined in the Energy White Paper, what Government support is being given to research and development into *(a)* low carbon technologies and *(b)* lightweight vehicle design initiatives; and how much of that Government support has gone to companies conducting such research in (i) Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East and (ii) the north east. [144770]

Mr. Timms: Pursuant to the carbon reduction targets in the Energy White Paper, the Government is supporting research into low carbon and carbon-free energy generation through my Department's Renewable Energy Programme and through the Research Councils. There are no projects currently being supported under the Renewable Energy Programme in the Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland East, area. There are, however 14 projects and I recently completed project that are receiving or have received funding in the north east region as a whole. This amounts to total funding of over £6.5 million and has been provided for projects including Solar PV Field Trials and the Stingray Tidal Stream Energy Device.

A New and Renewable Energy Centre (NAREC) has been set up by One North East in Blyth, Northumberland, to promote renewable energy in the north east. This is one of five centres of excellence designed to encourage the development of new technologies originating from the region's research base.

The Government are also pursuing its carbon reduction targets through research into energy efficiency, and has accepted the recommendation of the Chief Scientific Adviser in his Energy Research Report that this should be a priority area for investment. An inter-departmental group, on which the Energy Saving Trust and the Carbon Trust are represented, is co-ordinating work in this field.

In 2002, the Carbon Trust established the Low Carbon Innovation Programme to accelerate the development of new and emerging low carbon and energy efficient technologies in the UK, by investing in research, demonstration and development projects and leveraging in further funding.

As stated in the Government's Powering Future Vehicles Strategy, the Government supports research and development for the encouragement of low carbon vehicles through a number of initiatives including the New Vehicle Technology Fund (NVTF) and Foresight Vehicle programmes. At present, of the 20 projects that are being supported through NVTF, none is based in the north east, although the programme is open to all regions.

The Foresight Vehicle LINK programme supports technology transfer through collaborative R&D, aiming to raise the innovation performance of the automotive industry in the UK. The programme includes a wide portfolio of projects, valued in excess of £100 million. We do not keep separate records for each thematic group under the programme, but included in this funding is light-weighting and engine control which help reduce CO_2 emissions and alternative propulsion systems. DTI has committed £12.4 million to this programme.

Departmental Grants

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been allocated to fund the Grant for Investigating an Innovative Idea pilot scheme. [145492]

Nigel Griffiths: £2 million has been allocated for financial year 2003–04. £1 million has been allocated for financial year 2004–05 with a further £2 million being sought to supplement this.

E-mail

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken to increase international collaboration in dealing with spam. [146134]

Mr. Timms: Spam is widely recognised to be a global problem and the UK is active in discussions on international cooperation to tackle cross-border spam, both multilaterally (for example, at the World Summit on the Information Society and in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and bilaterally with the USA and other national governments. Proposals now being explored include cooperation between national enforcement agencies and the development of common international guidelines for governments and for business.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the proportion of *(a)* e-mails and *(b)* unwanted junk e-mails received in the UK that are sent from within the UK. [146135]

Mr. Timms: The Government do not have an estimate of the total proportion of e-mails received here that are sent from within and outside the UK. Industry estimates suggest that between 80 and 90 per cent. of unwanted junk e-mails received here come from outside the UK.

Fuel Cells UK

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the role of, and funding given to, Fuel Cells UK. [144772]

Mr. Timms: The role of Fuel Cells UK is to act as an umbrella body for the emerging UK fuel cells industry. My Department is providing pump-priming funding for a two year period for Fuel Cells UK to undertake a series of activities which will help to develop the UK fuel cell industry and to establish Fuel Cells UK as a potential trade association. Fuel Cells UK was launched on 7 May 2003 and key activities to date have included the development of a UK Fuel Cell Vision, the preparation of an industry capability guide, and representation on standards work through the BSI. Proposed future activities include the preparation of an academic research capability guide, and the development of a UK Fuel Cells Roadmap.

Funding to date by DTI since the start of this project has totalled £68,585.

Gas Prices

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what discussions she has had with Ofgem concerning the decision by the Financial Services Authority to join in its inquiry into wholesale gas prices; if she will publish the minutes of the meetings; and if she will make a statement; [146078]

(2) what discussions she has had with the Financial Services Authority concerning its decision to join Ofgem in its inquiry into wholesale gas prices; if she will publish the minutes of any such meetings; and if she will make a statement. [146082]

Mr. Timms: None. This was a matter for Ofgem and the Financial Services Authority.

Regulation

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many regulations her Department has *(a)* removed and *(b)* reformed in each of the last five years. [146121]

Nigel Griffiths: Figures can only be obtained by a manual sift of all regulations and Statutory Instruments in force from 1997 onwards.

Renewables Obligation

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money was paid into the buy-out fund by electricity suppliers as a result of failing to present renewables obligation certificates to Ofgem, in each year since the scheme began. [146130]

Mr. Timms: The Renewables Obligation has only been operating since 1 April 2002 and therefore data is only available for the first period of the obligation, i.e. financial year 2002–03. For this period, payments into the buy-out by electricity suppliers totalled £78,853,260 for England and Wales, and £11,210,730 for Scotland.

Small Businesses

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many inspectors are employed by Government Departments and agencies to carry out statutory inspections of small business premises. [145230]

Nigel Griffiths: There is no central database containing this information.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the costs to small businesses resulting from the recent strike by postal workers. [145259]

Mr. Timms: I have made no such estimate. Strike action, whether official or unofficial, is damaging and inconvenient to businesses that rely on Royal Mail's services. Royal Mail had in place contingency arrangements that attempted to minimise the impact on businesses of all sizes.

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the outcome was of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council held on 15 December; what the Government's stance was on the issues discussed, including its voting record; and if she will make a statement. [144901]

Mr. Timms: Anne Lambert, Deputy Permanent Representative to the European Union, represented the UK at the EU Energy Council in Brussels on 15 December.

The Council considered several matters of interest to the United Kingdom. Chief among these were the directive on gas security of supply and a proposed directive on energy efficiency standards for energy using products.

The Presidency introduced a short debate on a proposal on eco-design requirements for energy using products, which will set common EU energy efficiency standards for Energy Using Products (EuP), and is intended to make environmental improvements in areas that market forces cannot not handle. Describing it as a framework directive with a flexible approach, which took account of the characteristics of each sector, the Commission said that it wished to use the proposal to encourage industry to agree sectoral voluntary agreements. The Commission commended an integrated rather than thematic or sectoral approach, but rejected the idea of a priority product list as likely to trigger lengthy debates with industry on what should be included or excluded.

Member states broadly welcomed the proposal and its general approach of setting selection criteria but leaving the detailed product selection to a Regulatory Committee, but many saw more clarification on the detail as needed. Most supported an integrated approach and rejected the notion of a priority product list, though some MS asked the Commission to list the kind of products expected to be covered by the instrument. The UK suggested that the Commission develop a consultation strategy to identify the product categories. Others urged that the directive sets out clearly the criteria to be applied to product selection and emphasised the need to assess the impact on competitiveness, in particular the potential adverse impact on SMEs.

Following withdrawal of reserves by the UK and others, a general approach was agreed on the Presidency text for the proposed gas security of supply directive which sets minimum European security of supply standards and requires member states to define and publish non-discriminatory and transparent national security of supply policies compatible with the internal market. It establishes a Gas Coordination Group, outlines an approach to dealing with a major supply disruption at Community level, puts in place reporting and monitoring requirements, and provides for Commission intervention in the case of a perceived insufficiency of supplies to meet long-term gas demand. The Commission's agreement to the text, including a legal base of Article 100 EC was subject to a new Recital stating that security of supply obligations should not impede the functioning of the internal market nor impose unreasonable and disproportionate burdens.

The Commission presented a package of proposals on energy security: a Regulation on access to gas network in the internal market which mirrors a similar electricity Regulation adopted earlier this year as part of the internal market package; a directive on security of electricity supply and infrastructure investment, mirroring the gas measures agreed earlier; and a directive on energy end-use efficiency and energy services, which sets an energy efficiency savings target.

In lunchtime discussion on security of supply, the Commission argued that the need for action was underlined by forecasts showing the EU's need for 700 MW of extra weekly capacity by 2012 and given the 6–7 year time lag needed for building new capacity. The UK and most other member states argued against market intervention, stating that Governments and regulators were not responsible for investment in capacity or networks, and that the key need was for a stable investment framework. Drawing attention to our domestic evidence of the market working and sending investment signals, the UK emphasised that the Directive should not interfere with effective liberalisation and that we would not support any measures to control prices. Some member states supported the Commission's ideas, arguing the need for reinforced co-operation between transmission operators and regulators and for further reflection on the cause of recent price increases, which some consumers blamed on liberalisation, and for new impetus on interconnection.

In a short exchange on cost of compliance with the Kyoto Protocol, the Commission argued that the EU needs to embrace technology to combat climate change and for all options to be explored including nuclear. The Commission also said there was a need for the EU and its MS to re-assess the EU position in the light of Russia's failure to ratify the Kyoto Treaty.

Council Conclusions on Energy in a Wider Europe were adopted.

The Presidency, with Greece and the Commission, reported on the Euro-Med Ministerial conference in Rome on 1–2 December. With 38 participating countries, involving industry participation from the oil, gas and electricity sectors and with the objective of implementing the conclusions of the Athens ministerial in May 2003, the event had been a success.

The Commission briefed on the Energy Charter Treaty, the EU/Russia dialogue and relations with South East Europe. On the Energy Charter, given that Russia had not yet ratified and was still creating difficulties over the transit protocol, the Commission said that the EU and others needed to consider how to take things forward. In contrast, the Commission argued, progress had been made in the EU/Russia dialogue, e.g. investment increases in Russia by EU companies, and resolution of the problem of destination clauses (which prevent on-selling of Russian gas by the initial importing MS). The Commission defended itself against accusations of lack of transparency in the EU/Russia energy dialogue.

In a presentation on the International Partnership for Hydrogen, the Commission saw hydrogen as important as an environmentally friendly energy source and with transport potential, and urged international cooperation as essential in order to achieve the technological breakthrough needed to take forward its development.

Reporting on the joint informal Environment and Energy Council held at Montecatini in July 2003, the Presidency pointed to its success as a forum for bringing together environmental, energy, economic, market and other related topics as having been confirmed by the recent COP9 conclusions. Finally, Greece gave a report on the Ministerial Conference on the South-East European energy market in Athens on 8 December. An MoU had been agreed covering gas and electricity, to which the EU was a signatory.

Veterinary Medicines

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions her Department has had with representatives from the European Commission on removing companion animals from the Veterinary Prescribing Cascade. [146099]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

Proposals to change the prescribing cascade have been discussed during the current review of European medicines legislation but none of these included removing companion animals from the prescribing cascade. The Common Position of the Council of Ministers at the end of the first reading adopted a proposal to separate the provisions of the cascade for food producing animals from those for companion animals so that a less restrictive regime would apply to medicines for companion animals as there are no consumer health considerations. The UK supported these amendments.

The European Parliament adopted a compromise text for amendments in the second reading stage on 17 December 2003. This is expected to be considered for adoption by the Council of Ministers in January 2004. The compromise text did not make any changes to the Common Position in respect of the prescribing cascade.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of prescriptions for treating animals issued by veterinary surgeons were for generic drugs in each of the last five years for which records exist. [146103]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

The Government does not collect information on prescriptions issued by veterinary surgeons.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate on the proposed review of the prescribing categories of veterinary drugs, including prescription only medicines. [146104]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate is a Defra Agency and so reports to me. The legal classification of a veterinary medicinal product is based on the perceived risks of the product when it is authorised. Products which have a greater risk, require prior diagnosis or are difficult to administer are made prescription only medicines. The Government have accepted that the legal classification of products should be reviewed automatically as proposed by the Competition Commission. Such reviews will allow reports on the use of products to be taken into account when considering whether the legal classification should be changed.

This review is one of a number of changes proposed by the Report of the Independent Review of Dispensing by Veterinary Surgeons of Prescription only Medicines (the Marsh Report) in 2001, the 2003 Report from the Competition Commission into the cost of prescription only medicines, and the Review of European medicines legislation. When the European review has concluded, the VMD will consult interested parties on implementing all of the agreed changes.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the recommendations of the Competition Commission on prescription only medicines with reference to the European review of the prescribing of veterinary medicines. [146105]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's formal response to the Competition Commission's report on prescription only medicines was published on 9 July 2003. There were two recommendations relating to the European Review of veterinary medicines legislation.

For Recommendation 8, the Government agreed to keep in mind the importance of retaining the existing rights of member states to control their channels of distribution and supply of veterinary medicines during the negotiations on Review 2001 and has firmly followed that principle throughout.

The Government said that Recommendation 9 on establishing new distribution categories for veterinary medicinal products would be considered in the light of the outcome of the European Review of medicines legislation.

Wind Turbines

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact on wildlife of wind turbines. [145002]

Mr. Timms: Studies of the impact of wind farms on wildlife, in particular birds, suggests that there is only a small risk of bird strikes from the operation of wind turbines which have been properly sited.

Under the normal planning regime and for consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 or the Transport and Works Act 1992 wind farm developers are required to consider all environmental aspects of wind energy projects and produce an Environmental Impact Assessment. These assessments are available to the public.

DEFENCE

Attitude Surveys

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey responded *(a)* yes and *(b)* no to (i) question 26 and (ii) question 27; and if he will make a statement. [143621]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is drawn from the May 2003 edition of the Continuous Attitude Survey.

I should point out that questions 26 and 27 in the September 2002 survey relating to the reporting of incidents of unwelcome behaviour and satisfaction with the reporting process, have been replaced by questions 30 and 31 in the current survey.

Royal Navy

Q30. Do you know where to get information about the RN/RM complaints procedure for unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment or bullying?

	Royal Navy		*Royal Marines*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Yes	691	74.70	43	52.40
No	98	10.60	23	28.00
Unsure	127	13.70	15	18.30
Total	916	99	81	99

Q31. Satisfied/Dissatisfied with complaints procedure.

Percentage

	Objectivity and fairness with which your complaint was handled	*Time taken to resolve your complaint*
Royal Navy		
Very satisfied	0.90	0.50
Satisfied	1.40	1.30
Neither	4.90	5
Dissatisfied	1.50	1.90
Very dissatisfied	2.60	2.30
N/A	88.70	89
Royal Marines		
Very satisfied	0.00	0.00
Satisfied	1.20	1.20
Neither	1.20	3.70
Dissatisfied	1.20	1.20
Very dissatisfied	2.40	0.00
N/A	93.90	93.90

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of respondents to the last assessed Royal Navy/Royal Marine Continuous Attitude Survey mentioned *(a)* privatisation and contractualisation and *(b)* privatisation in their answers to Question 32; and if he will make a statement. [143623]

Mr. Caplin: Question 32 in the September 2002 Continuous Attitude Survey is asked at Question 35 in the May 2003 survey, the last assessed survey.

There were no responses to this question.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144981]

Mr. Caplin: As there are less than five members of the senior civil service in the Department with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with Exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Identity Cards

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications of the introduction of compulsory identity cards for his Department. [143983]

Mr. Caplin: The Home Office has lead responsibility for developing the national identity cards scheme. The introduction of the scheme is a long-term undertaking and there are ongoing discussions which the Ministry of Defence will contribute to.

Our assessment has indicated that the proposals for the introduction of compulsory identity cards would benefit the Ministry of Defence by aiding the identification of individuals who have a relationship with the Department, but who are not direct employees. Examples include potential new recruits, past employees, members of the Reserve Forces, job applicants, visitors and contractors.

We have also considered the needs of foreign nationals serving in the armed forces. Their current military ID is not universally accepted outside of the Department, so there would be benefit in providing them with a United Kingdom ID card under the foreign residents scheme, recognising their status as members of the UK Armed Forces.

We are not intending to replace the military ID card (or its equivalent for civilian employees) with the national ID card since our own ID card is used as a means for controlling access to MOD premises.

Iraq

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps need to be taken to enable the number of civilian casualties killed by British forces in Iraq since the end of the conflict to be ascertained. [141675]

Mr. Ingram: All casualties witnessed by UK forces are reported, but it is not always possible to determine accurately the number of casualties that occur during a particular incident. For example, in some incidents,

Iraqi injured and/or dead may have been taken away by their compatriots before UK Forces could investigate. In other incidents, UK forces have been forced to withdraw from situations before an accurate assessment of the number of casualties could be made. In such incidents we have no reliable means of ascertaining the number of casualties and there are no practical steps we could take to do so.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has examined on the alleged shooting of a demonstrator by British forces in Basra on *(a)* 4 October and *(b)* 9 August. [141678]

Mr. Ingram: I am aware of allegations of an incident during a demonstration on 9 August but no civilian casualties were reported.

On 4 October, on the periphery of a demonstration, British soldiers killed an Iraqi gunman in self-defence. His automatic weapon and ammunition were recovered.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has examined on the alleged deaths of Iraqi civilians in British custody on *(a)* 13 and *(b)* 18 May. [141679]

Mr. Ingram: There are investigations underway of alleged deaths of Iraqis while in custody but I am not aware of any involving deaths which occurred on 13 or 18 May 2003.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines have been issued to UK military personnel in relation to the use of force in non-combat situations in Southern Iraq. [141682]

Mr. Ingram: The Rules Of Engagement issued to UK forces in Iraq govern all use of force. Rules of Engagement are confidential and withheld in accordance with Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the likely future levels of the *(a)* Royal Navy and *(b)* Royal Air Force presence in the Iraq theatre. [143731]

Mr. Ingram: We keep force levels under constant review but there are no current plans to alter the major Royal Navy or RAF assets depioyed to Operation Telic. I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 30W.

Territorial Army

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funding is provided to Territorial Army personnel returning from service in the Gulf. [145762]

Mr. Caplin: Territorial Army personnel returning from the Gulf continue to receive their pay and allowances which apply until no longer required in whole-time Army service, or until the expiration of any paid leave granted (which immediately follows whole-time Army service). On demobilisation, a travel warrant is provided for the journey home. TA personnel may be entitled to receive certain pension payments under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme or as defined within the Army Pensions Warrant 1997.

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training days Territorial Army personnel underwent in advance of deployment to the Gulf. [145765]

Mr. Caplin: Territorial Army (TA) personnel deployed to the Gulf have been designated 'Fit For Role', which requires a minimum of 27 days training in the preceding 12 months. In addition, before deployment, they will have attended the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre for a five day period of intensive revision of their Individual Training Directives (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical, First Aid, Shooting, Fitness and Recognition) and also received series of theatre specific briefings at the Reinforcement Holding Unit. Thereafter, TA personnel posted to regular units would train with them.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what representations he has received on the risk of dependency resulting from recent increases in funding to developing countries to tackle the HIV/AIDS epidemic. [145436]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: I have received no representations on this matter. However, all DFID programmes, including those aimed at helping to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS, seek to achieve long term sustainability rather than build dependency. The UK's Call for Action on HIV/AIDS, launched on 1 December last year, has at its core an objective for each country to have one national HIV/AIDS Strategy, one national AIDS Commission and one way to monitor and report progress —rather than having parallel, and less sustainable, systems and structures driven by the needs of donors.

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps are being taken to ensure that HIV/AIDS policies take into account the particular needs of orphans and vulnerable children. [146160]

Gareth Thomas: The UK Government are committed to intensifying the response to HIV/AIDS, including responding to the growing number of orphans and children made vulnerable by AIDS (OVCs).

DFID is supporting the efforts of UNICEF and UNAIDS to produce a strategic framework on OVCs. Key elements of this framework include:

Treatment programmes to prolong the lives of parents ;

Free access to education;

Enhanced support to the families and communities caring for OVCs.

Meeting the needs of orphans is a complex issue requiring a comprehensive response. DFID is gaining experience in the most effective ways of developing integrated, cross-sectoral programmes of support for orphans and their carers. For example, in Malawi social protection measures for families affected by HIV/AIDS are integrated into Malawi's Poverty Reduction Strategy. These measures include targeted nutrition and

welfare transfers, legislation on inheritance and the introduction of less intensive crops to affected households.

In addition, in several countries in Southern Africa where there has been drought DFID is supporting a school-feeding programme (implemented by the World Food Programme). The programme is deliberately designed to keep children, including OVCs, at school and learning for the future. In South Africa DFID works closely with the Department of Social Development to ensure that children (and parents) can access the grants they are entitled to. We are also starting work with the Church of the Province of Southern Africa to reduce stigma, improve home-based care and care for OVCs. In Zimbabwe, DFID is providing support for OVCs and child-headed households through its NGO feeding programme.

Meeting the needs of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS is a challenge that DFID is determined to address effectively.

Indigenous People's Demonstration Project

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column 719W, when he expects to make a decision on whether the Indigenous People's Demonstration Project will be affected by the reallocation of money for middle income countries. [145615]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: DFID will continue to support the Indigenous Peoples' Demonstration Project in Brazil until at least early 2006. Expenditure over the next two years will, however, have to be reduced in view of the reduction in funds available for the region. This is consistent with the approach being taken with all other DFID projects in Latin American Middle Income Countries scheduled to continue into 2005/06 and beyond, which are either being ended prematurely or reduced in scale. A decision on whether to extend into 2006/07 will be taken in the second half of 2005 in the light of the project's progress and DFID's regional priorities. We expect that the project will have had a significant impact by early 2006 with over half of the originally envisaged training and institutional strengthening support provided by that date.

Iraq

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are in place to ensure that reconstruction funds in Iraq are administered in a way that secures value for money. [145282]

Hilary Benn: Regular DFID procedures to ensure value for money are being applied in the management of our assistance to Iraq.

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the allocated reconstruction budget for Iraq has been spent on contracted expatriate employees; and what estimate has been made of future expenditure in this regard. [145283]

Hilary Benn: To date, DFID has disbursed approximately £8.5 million on the provision of international staff on projects which we are undertaking, directly and through commercial companies, in Iraq. We estimate that the total expenditure on international staff working on already-approved projects will amount to approximately £26.4 million. Further projects may be approved in the future.

These figures include the costs of travel, subsistence, training, communications, insurance and additional security measures, as well as salaries.

The figures do not include the costs of international staff employed by United Nations bodies, nor of NGOs working on activities funded by DFID.

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to his statement of 15 December, *Official Report*, column 1319, if he will place in the Library details of the reconstruction projects that have been launched in Iraq; and if he will make a statement on the *(a)* purpose and *(b)* costs of each project funded by the UK. [145641]

Hilary Benn: An updated list of DFID humanitarian and reconstruction funding in Iraq, giving the purpose and cost of each allocation, will be placed in the Library of the House this week. Regular updates on DFID's programme in Iraq can be found at: http://www.dfid.gov.uk.

Meat (Illegal Imports)

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with overseas home affairs ministers about the illegal importation of meat products into the UK. [142150]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

We have made general approaches through our diplomatic posts overseas to the governments of other countries, to promote awareness of our import rules on meat and animal products. Defra Ministers have also raised these matters in bilateral contacts with visiting ministers from overseas governments.

Since 11 April 2003, when Her Majesty's Customs and Excise took over responsibility for illegal imports publicity overseas, they have made contact with a number of embassies and high commissions. So far Nigeria, Ghana, India, USA, Thailand and Kenya have agreed to assist us with these issues in their countries.

We will all continue to work with our posts and embassies abroad to raise awareness of our import rules abroad.

Overseas Assistance

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance his Department has provided to *(a)* Bermuda, *(b)* British Virgin Islands and *(c)* Cayman Islands in the past year; and if he will make a statement. [145786]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: We do not now provide direct development assistance to any of them. In the financial year 2002–03, however, we spent nearly £90,000 in the closing stages of British Virgin islands' graduation from

receipt of direct DFID support. This was mainly provision of advice on airport development and scholarships for overseas study. Both British Virgin Islands and Cayman Islands benefit indirectly from our regional support for Caribbean overseas territories, in areas such as environmental protection and disaster planning.

Uzbekistan

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what aid the UK has provided to Uzbekistan since 2001; and for what purposes. [145755]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: The figures for UK bilateral assistance to Uzbekistan are: 2000–01—£484,000; 2001–02—£397,000; 2002–03—£491,000. Our bilateral support has focused on the development of primary health care: training doctors in general practice; and strengthening civil society and community based organisations.

Additionally, the U.'s attributed share of multilateral assistance to Uzbekistan in calendar year 2001 (the most recent year for which figures are available) was £1.6 million broken down by EC £0.9 million, UN £0.3 million and £0.4 million other.

SCOTLAND

Barnett Formula

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the operation of the Barnett Formula has, since its introduction, *(a)* narrowed, *(b)* widened and *(c)* maintained relative per capita spending between Scotland and England; and if he will make a statement. [144666]

Mrs. McGuire *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* Information on identifiable spending on services by country is published in Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (the latest version is Cm 5901). Identifiable spending covers both devolved and reserved spending. Analysis of trends in Scottish spending is also contained in the Scottish Executive's annual publication Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland.

Block Grant

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes have been made to the coverage of the block grant arrangements since 1979. [144664]

Mrs. McGuire *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* The arrangements for funding the Scottish Parliament are set out in the Statement of Funding Policy, which was first published by the Treasury in 1999. Revised Statements were published in 2000 and 2002. Information on the operation of the Barnett formula prior to 1999 is contained in the second report of the Treasury Committee for 1997–98, on the Barnett formula.

Consolidated Fund

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums of money were *(a)* added to and *(b)* subtracted from the Scottish Consolidated Fund in each year since 1999. [144665]

Mrs. McGuire *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* The operation of the Scottish Consolidated Fund is a matter for the Scottish Executive. Details of grant paid to the Scottish Executive are published in main and supplementary Scotland Office estimates, and in Scotland Office Department Reports.

Income Tax

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the costs that would fall on *(a)* the Government and *(b)* business if the Scottish Parliament voted to use its powers to vary the basic rate of income tax as specified in Section 72 of the Scotland Act 1998. [144667]

Mrs. McGuire *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* The use of the tax varying powers, and related costs, are matters for the Scottish Executive. Scottish Executive Ministers have made it clear that they do not intend to use the tax varying powers during the course of this Scottish Parliament.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Brussels Summit

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement as to whether the 82 points referred to by Mr. Berlusconi as having been agreed to at the Brussels Summit were agreed; and whether they will be reopened. [145497]

Mr. MacShane *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave to the right hon. and learned Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) today (UIN145406).

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [146010]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: At September 2003, eight FCO staff in the senior management structure declared themselves to have a disability. This represents 1.7 per cent. of all staff at this level. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is on target to meet the 3 per cent. target agreed with the Cabinet Office for 2005. Staff advisory and support groups have been established and a diversity manager is in place to develop and implement policy.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the letter to him dated 10 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to M. Sam. [145960]

Mr. Mullin: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 18 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1107W.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the safety of asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo who are returned to their homeland after being refused asylum in the UK. [143661]

Beverley Hughes: The most recent information on the treatment of returned failed asylum seekers, as well as on other issues that most commonly arise in connection with asylum applications made by asylum seekers from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is contained in the Home Office Country Report on DRC that was published at the end of October. A copy of the Report can be found on the Home Office internet site at: http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=172

There is no objective evidence to support allegations of either systematic or arbitrary detention or ill treatment of returnees. The British ambassador in Kinshasa has seen no evidence that local human rights organisations have concerns about the safety of returns. Other EU countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands have also found no evidence that returnees face any ill treatment. The situation in DRC—including the treatment of returnees—is kept under review in consultation with the UNHCR and other EU countries. UNHCR's position is that they do not object in principle to enforced removals to Kinshasa of failed asylum seekers who have been found, following a full and fair asylum determination process, not to be in need of international protection.

If an asylum application is refused, the applicant has a right of appeal to the independent appellate authorities against that decision. If following any appeal the applicant has still not established a need for international protection, then we consider it reasonable to expect an individual in that position to leave voluntarily. If they do not, we believe it entirely proper for us to take the appropriate enforcement action.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of staff employed within his Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145932]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: At 1 June 2003. 9.76 per cent. of all FCO UK-based staff were over 55 years of age: 16 (2.8 per cent.) UK-based staff with a length of service of less than one year were over 55 years of age.

Draft EU Constitution

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of the breakdown of negotiations for the European Constitution; when the next EU summit is scheduled to take place; and what items will be on the agenda. [146224]

Mr. MacShane: The Intergovernmental Conference was close to consensus on the majority of issues relating to the draft Constitutional Treaty for the EU, although final agreement was not reached. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said to the House on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1321 "In time an agreement will be necessary to allow enlargement to work effectively". Until then, the business of the European Union will continue as normal under the existing Treaties. The Irish Presidency has undertaken to report on the way forward to the European Council at its meeting scheduled for 25–26 March 2004. The full agenda for that meeting has not yet been finalised.

European Council

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the oral statement of the Prime Minister of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 1319–36, on the European Council, if he will list the points in the proposed European Constitution where consensus was close at the Brussels meeting of the European Council on 12 and 13 December; and if he will list the remaining points of disagreement. [145406]

Mr. Straw: Proposals published by the Italian Presidency on 9 December 2003 (and placed in the Library of the House) covered a wide range of separate issues of concern to one or more EU member states. In respect of most, though not all of these, the outcome was satisfactory for the United Kingdom, including on energy, and the "passerelle" clause and modalities for future revisions of Title III of Part III of the Treaty.

In his summing up at the IGC on Saturday 13 December 2003. Mr. Berlusconi did not list each of the individual points on which there was near consensus, but did say that they included unanimity for taxation, criminal justice, own resources decisions and social security.

He did not, however, suggest that this was an exclusive list, and we had already made clear that there were some other outstanding issues on which we would require satisfaction before we could agree any draft Treaty on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also made clear at the IGC, as he did in his Statement on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 132, that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed.

Overseas Posts (Performance Targets)

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what targets have been set for *(a)* processing entry clearance applications at British posts overseas for (i) permanent settlement and (ii) temporary purposes, *(b)* the dispatch of explanatory statements where an appeal against refusal is lodged and *(c)* the retention of explanatory statements by the Home Office before dispatch to the Immigration Appellate Authority; and how those targets have been met over the last 12 months for which figures are available. [144621]

Mr. Mullin: I can confirm that the following targets have been set:

90 per cent. of entry clearance issuing posts to interview settlement entry clearance applicants within a set target time. The target time is 12 weeks except for New Delhi, Bombay, Dhaka and Islamabad; separate targets, currently nine months apply for these posts due to the high number of settlement applications received. The latest performance measurements, covering the period 1 April to 31 October 2003, indicate that 98.4 per cent. of posts have met their target.

90 per cent. of straightforward non-settlement entry clearance applications to be decided within 24 hours. The latest performance measurement against this target, covering the period 1 April to 31 October 2003. is 91.7 per cent.

90 per cent. of posts to make a decision within 10 working days on non-settlement applications requiring an interview. The latest performance measurement against this target, covering the same period, is 88.0 per cent.

For settlement applications UKvisas' Best Practice gives a target of three months between the receipt of an appeal by the post abroad and its dispatch to the Appeals Processing Centre of the Home Office. For all non-settlement applications the target is one month. Figures for performance against these targets are done on a post-by-post basis and technical problems has meant that the figures are unreliable.

I understand that there are no targets set by the Home Office for the processing of entry clearance appeals once received by the Appeals Processing Centre. The processing of all appeals is dictated by the capacity of the Immigration Appellate Authority which is able to accept 7,100 cases per month. Ministerial priority states that 6,000 of these must be asylum cases, if these are available. This has been the case until October 2003. Significantly more entry clearance cases have been sent since then and this is set to continue over the next few months.

Pakistan (Immigration)

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the average time taken in the last 12 months was between the lodging of an appeal in Pakistan against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement and the completion of processing by UKvisas. [145393]

Mr. Mullin: Appeals against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement are processed in the UK by the Appeals Processing Centre of the Home Office. The current average time between receipt of an appeal at our high commission in Islamabad and its dispatch to the appeals processing centre is approximately four months.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long he estimates that it will take for UKvisas to process the backlog of appeals in Pakistan against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement. [145394]

Mr. Mullin: Appeals against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement are processed in the UK by the appeals processing centre of the Home Office. Our high commission in Islamabad estimates that the average time between receipt of an appeal and its despatch to the appeals processing centre will be reduced to three months, in line with UK visas best practice guidelines for the processing of appeals, by the end of January.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the earliest date of an appeal in Pakistan against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement which has yet to be processed is. [145397]

Mr. Mullin: The earliest date of an appeal against the refusal of entry clearance for settlement from our high commission in Islamabad awaiting despatch to the appeals processing centre of the Home Office is 15 August 2003.

United States (Anthrax Production)

Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his US counterparts on US policy on production of anthrax. [145739]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: There have been no recent discussions between my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and his US counterpart regarding production of anthrax.

The United States is a state party to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). Under Article X of the convention, a state party is permitted to keep and produce quantities of bacteriological agents for peaceful purposes such as in the production of vaccines.

In 1969, President Richard Nixon put an end to the United States' offensive Biological Weapons programme.

The US has stated that it only produces small quantities of anthrax for research to develop defensive systems to detect deadly spores in the air and to decontaminate areas in the event of a biological attack.

Yukos Affair

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer of 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 798W, what the nature was of his conversation with the Russian ambassador regarding the Yukos Affair. [146008]

Mr. Rammell: My conversation with the Russian ambassador ranged over a number of issues but I took the opportunity to raise the "Yukos affair". I expressed the importance we attach to the continuation of the successful reform process in Russia, in which the UK has a significant interest.

I stressed that it is important that foreign investor confidence should be maintained and that Russia continues to be seen as offering an environment in which investors can do business, where the law is applied impartially and with respect for due process.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agrochemicals

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of how much was spent by *(a)* agricultural

and *(b)* horticultural producers on agrochemicals in each of the past six years for which figures are available. [146090]

Alun Michael: There are no figures available that specifically identify spending by agricultural and horticultural producers on agrochemicals.

However the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) does receive annual figures of overall turnover of all sales of approved pesticides as a part of its calculation of the pesticide levy to help fund the regulatory process. These cover sales of agricultural, horticultural, amateur, forestry and amenity pesticides.

The overall value of UK sales of approved products that have been declared to PSD are as follows:

	£ million
1998	591
1999	572
2000	484
2001	439
2002	446
2003	448

Air Quality

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with *(a)* BAE systems and *(b)* other manufacturers regarding the timetable for implementation of new aircraft technology which would reduce detrimental effects on air quality. [143824]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra has not had any discussions with BAE Systems or other aircraft technology manufacturers.

There is a continuous dialogue between the Government and industry on action to reduce emissions impacts. Two current fora stand out:

a. Aerospace Innovation and Growth Team—this Department of Trade and Industry sponsored initiative has adopted the Advisory Council for Aeronautics Research in Europe targets for improvements in fuel efficiency and oxides of nitrogen emissions by 2020; and

b. Greener by Design—an industry initiated group looking at innovative solutions to aviation environmental problems. It reported in February 2002 and is now entering a phase of work promoting a range of actions, including technological solutions, to reduce emissions.

The Government also engage with UK industry and the wider manufacturing sector through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) pushing for action to reduce emissions. ICAO action is focused upon shorter term technology improvements through increases in the stringency of emissions standards and establishing longer term technology goals.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the company commissioned by her Department to conduct the air quality study around Heathrow has previously conducted studies and research for airlines. [143825]

Mr. Bradshaw: Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants (CERC) has not previously conducted studies or research for airlines. CERC has previously conducted studies involving airport emissions for local authorities and for BAA plc; a Dublin airport study is ongoing.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether interim findings from the study on air quality in the Heathrow area commissioned by her Department have been incorporated in discussions on the proposal for a third runway at Heathrow. [143826]

Mr. Bradshaw: Interim findings from the study are not yet available and so have not been incorporated in discussions on airport capacity at Heathrow.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the report on air quality around Heathrow from Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants Ltd. will be discussed with the Department for Transport after its publication. [143827]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Department for Transport will be kept informed of progress of the research and the report will be discussed with the Department before and after its publication.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make it her policy to use the proposed Animal Welfare Bill to update the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963; and if she will make a statement. [146173]

Mr. Bradshaw: Yes. The Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 is one of a number of pieces of legislation relating to captive and domestic animals that my department is looking to revise and consolidate under the proposed Animal Welfare Bill.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her assessment is of the effectiveness of Government attempts *(a)* to improve the welfare standards of horses being transported for slaughter in Europe within the draft EU regulation and *(b)* to include within it the dispensation for the UK to maintain protection for its horses; and if she will make a statement. [145491]

Mr. Bradshaw: One of the aims of the draft EU regulation on the welfare of animals during transport is to improve the welfare of horses transported for slaughter in Europe and the Government welcomes and supports those aspects of the draft. We are also developing measures to protect horses that are based on animal welfare, will further improve horse welfare throughout the EU and that do not rely on special dispensation for the UK.

Bovine TB

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how long mycobacterium bovis bacilli can survive on open pasture; and under what conditions. [141395]

Mr. Bradshaw: Mycobacterium bovis may be present within a variety of media on open pasture, each influencing the survival of the bacilli. In cow manure M. bovis may survive for up to four months in autumn, five months in winter and two months in spring, dependent on concentration. Greater concentrations promote survival.

When exposed to sunlight at 24–34 degrees celsius M. bovis has survived for 5–11 months in manure at pasture. Survival in samples buried in 1cm deep pits has been up to one year and at 5cm deep up to two years.

M. bovis can be highly concentrated in badger urine and can survive for over a week on open pasture during the winter but very few bacilli survive after four weeks. During the summer survival can reduce to less than three days in badger urine.

M. bovis in badger bronchial pus and sputum can survive for up to 10 weeks on open pasture in winter but less than one week in summer. Survival in badger faeces can be for up to one month during the winter but less than two weeks in summer.

Survival may also be influenced by the presence of other microorganisms in the environment. Fungi, algae, protozoans and many other bacteria compete with M. bovis for nutrients, may have greater growth rates, and may produce natural antibiotics.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many TB reactor cattle were reported to her Department and its predecessors, *(a)* in each year from 1990 to 2002 and *(b)* from 1 January to 31 October; how many were subject to culture testing; and how many proved TB positive on culture. [142468]

Mr. Bradshaw: Table 1 shows the number of TB reactors, how many were subject to culture for Mycobacterium bovis, and the number successfully cultured for the years 1990–2002 in Great Britain.

Table 2 gives provisional data for the number of TB reactors, the number subject to culture, and the number successfully cultured for Mycobacterium bovis in Great Britain for 2003 (till end of October).

Table 1 GB Figures

	Number of TB Reactors	*Number Subject To Culture Testing*	*TB Positive on Culture*
1990	719	4	[1]—
1991	1,050	4	[1]—
1992	1,086	[1]—	[1]—
1993	1,814	2	[1]—
1994	2,248	515	238
1995	2,861	2,492	1,051
1996	3,296	2,852	1,163
1997	3,358	3,005	1,196
1998	5,063	4,121	1,645
1999	6,047	4,894	2,033
2000	7,143	5,456	2,550
2001	5,472	3,818	1,447
2002	20,053	14,102	2,557

[1]— Data not available

Table 2 2003 GB Figures (provisional)

	January to October 2003
Number of TB Reactors	17,589
Number Subject To Culture	12,228
TB Positive on Culture	2,681

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many badgers were culled in each reactive area as part of the Independent Science Group study into bovine TB. [144928]

Mr. Bradshaw: The table lists the numbers of badgers culled in the reactive treatment areas of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial.

Numbers of badgers culled in reactive treatment areas of randomised badger culling trial

Triplet	*Name of reactive treatment area*	*Number of badgers culled*
A	Blaisdon	117
B	Hartland	301
C	Otterham	394
D	Puddlestone	122
E	Cold Ashton	188
F	Stithians	435
G	Nettley Knowle	256
H	Brendon Hills	159
I	Alderton	94
J	Cadbury	0

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has for post movement testing of cattle for exposure to M.bovis; and what assessment she has made of the implications of such testing *(a)* within four months of movement and *(b)* by the date of the next due test of the herd from which the animal came. [144436]

Mr. Bradshaw: All farmers have been sent a leaflet "Golden rules for a healthy herd", which advises purchasers to check the disease status of cattle prior to purchase and to consider arranging a private TB test for their herd.

In February 2003, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced a review of our bovine tuberculosis strategy. Early in the new year we will be publishing a consultation document which will represent the outcome of the first stage of that review. The consultation document will include proposals for short term measures for reducing the risk of geographic spread of bovine TB from high to low incidence areas, including consideration of proposals for the pre and/or post movement testing of cattle.

When considering post-movement testing of cattle sold from farm to farm, we have envisaged that, as a general rule, such tests would be administered between 60 and 120 days after movement (i.e. 2–4 months post movement). This is to ensure that a minimum of 60 days have elapsed since the last test and since any potential exposure to M.bovis on the premises of origin, to avoid problems of de-sensitisation caused by recent testing and to allow for the normal delay in the development of a response to the skin test. Knowledge of whether a pre-movement test had taken place and when, would allow the post movement test to be better targeted.

Assuming post-movement testing is carried out as outlined, the date of the next due test of the herd of origin need not be considered.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the recognised minimum time required is from exposure of cattle to M.bovis to an immune response which will show in the skin test used by her Department. [144437]

Mr. Bradshaw: The immune response elicited by Mycobacterium bovis in cattle takes several weeks to develop to a stage where it is detectable. For the single intradermal comparative test used in the UK and Ireland, this period of "unresponsiveness" or latency varies between 30 and 50 days.

To allow for random and natural variation in the latency period of individual animals, the legislation requires repeat testing to be carried out at intervals of at least 60 days from the date of the removal (or isolation) of all the reactors identified at the previous skin test.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what significant variations in incubation period have been observed in herd breakdowns involving several cattle reactors resulting from infection with M.bovis. [144439]

Mr. Bradshaw: Many factors influence the progression of Mycobacterium bovis, infection into detectable disease, including the strain of the bacterium, size of bacterial challenge and route of infection. Other factors include affected animal (species, breed, genotype, age) or the effects of its environment (nutritional status, stress, other infections and environmental bacteria).

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many strains of M.bovis have been found in *(a)* cattle and *(b)* badgers in the UK; and what assessment has been made of the virulence of each strain. [144440]

Mr. Bradshaw: M.bovis isolates are routinely typed using a DNA fingerprinting technique called spoligotyping. In Great Britain 30 different spoligotypes have been identified in cattle and in 16 badgers. Of those in cattle, 12 of those account for 99 per cent. of the isolates.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of whether development of lesions in cattle following exposure to M.bovis is the result of *(a)* a more virulent strain, *(b)* the level of infective dose and *(c)* the frequency of the infective dose. [144441]

Mr. Bradshaw: The pathogenesis of bovine TB is not yet fully understood. As a result, Defra is funding several research projects into the pathogenesis and immunology of the disease.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average length of herd breakdown was in *(a)* 2002–03 and *(b)* 1998; how many 60 day tests were needed to clear (i) suspect and (ii) infected herds in each year; and what the cost of the tests were. [144442]

Mr. Bradshaw: The information is as follows:

(a) The average duration of TB incidents ending in 2002 was skewed by those herds already restricted when TB testing was suspended during the foot and mouth disease outbreak of 2001. The figures for TB incidents ending in 2002 (the last year for which statistics are available) were as follows: unconfirmed incidents—149 days; confirmed incident—291 days.

(b) The mean length of unconfirmed new TB incidents (herd breakdowns) ending in 1998 was 114 days, i.e. slightly less than two short interval (60-day) tests. In the same year, the mean length of confirmed new incidents was 208 days.

Information on the cost of tests needed to clear unconfirmed and confirmed herd incidents in each year is not readily available and can be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of badgers which appeared TB free in post-mortem examination were culture positive to M.bovis, in the last year for which figures are available. [144443]

Mr. Bradshaw: The last year for which data are available is 1999. These are from Badger Removal Operations and the Road Traffic Accident (RTA) survey that predate the Randomised Badger Culling Trial and associated RTA survey.

In 1999, 874 badger carcasses were considered suitable for post-mortem examination. 753 displayed no visible lesions suggestive of TB. Mycobacterium bovis was isolated in 54 of these.

Therefore, the proportion appearing TB free at post-mortem, but culture positive for m. bovis is 7.2 per cent.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of cattle showed no visible lesions in post mortem examination but were culture positive for M.bovis, in the last year for which figures are available. [144444]

Mr. Bradshaw: Last year, 6,600 samples were sent for laboratory culture after no visible lesions were found at post mortem. Mycobacterium bovis was successfully cultured in 5.6 per cent. of these.

Bovine TB (Badgers)

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment has been made of whether badgers infected by TB may excrete urine from which viable m. bovis bacilli may be isolated; what the typical quantities per millilitre are; and whether such levels are capable of causing infection in cattle through *(a)* contamination of feed and *(b)* other mechanisms. [144445]

Mr. Bradshaw: Some badgers develop TB infection in the kidneys 37 per cent. of infected badgers sampled post mortem between 1971 and 1978 m. bovis was isolated from the kidneys and may excrete m. bovis bacilli in urine. Urine is typically left in trails up to a metre or

more in length and may be focussed at a latrine or distributed more randomly as the badger forages. Concentrations of up to 300,000 bacilli per ml of badger urine have been reported and experimental nasal inoculation of cattle suggests that, at this concentration of viable microbes, less than 0.03 ml would need to be inhaled by cattle in order to promote slow infection.

Investigations into infection of cattle from feed and other sources contaminated with infected badger urine are lacking. However, risk of infection to cattle by infected badger urine on cattle feed would be a function of the survival of the microbe in the feed (which is dependent on, for example, duration since excretion, moisture content of the environment, exposure to UV rays) the number of microbes consumed by the cattle and the method of consumption (i.e. ingestion or inhalation). I am unaware of measurements of m. bovis survival in cattle feed but the environment inside farm buildings is generally considered to be conducive to longer periods of survival than at pasture, where m. bovis in badger urine has survived for three days in summer and 28 days in winter.

Cattle appear less able to detect badger urine than faeces at pasture away from latrines. In addition, patches contaminated with urine detected by cattle appear to be sniffed more than those contaminated with faeces. Furthermore, some cattle do not select against latrines and freely graze over them. Therefore, potential sources of risk of cattle contact with infected badger urine include the ingestion of contaminated feed from feed stores or in troughs; investigation/grazing at and around latrines; and the investigation/grazing of contaminated pasture.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what controls there are on the movement of wild badgers, for relocation elsewhere, with particular reference to Krebs trapping areas. [144446]

Mr. Bradshaw: Badgers are a protected species and it is an offence to take (or attempt to take) a badger from the wild, including for the purpose of relocation elsewhere (Protection of Badgers Act 1992, s.1(1)). A person guilty of this offence is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for up to six months and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

There are certain exceptions to this offence, two of which are specifically relevant to the issue of relocating badgers. These are the treatment of injured or sick badgers, and relocations licensed by the appropriate statutory conservation agency or agricultural department (English Nature and Defra, respectively, in England).

Under section 6, a person is not guilty of an offence by reason only of:

"*(a)* taking or attempting to take a badger which has been disabled otherwise than by this act and is taken or to be taken solely for the purpose of tending it".

As a native species, there are no specific restrictions under current law regulating where badgers are released once they have recovered. Normally, once fit enough to be released into the wild, the badger will be returned to the location where it was originally found. This approach is recommended on welfare grounds due to their territorial nature, and also to avoid any risk of transmitting disease. However, there are situations in which this course of action may not be feasible (particularly in the case of orphaned cubs).

There is a voluntary code of practice covering the rehabilitation and release of badgers, and this has a precautionary approach aimed at minimising the risk of transmitting bovine tuberculosis (TB). All badgers to be relocated are tested for TB three times. Only animals testing negative to all three tests are released and any animal testing positive is euthanased. The code also requires that all released badgers are permanently marked (by a tattoo or microchip) and registered. The code is available via the internet at: http://www.badger.org.uk/action/badger-rehabilitation-protocol-contents.html

Under section 10 of the Act, licences may be issued to permit badgers to be taken from the wild (and relocated if necessary) for a limited range of specified purposes, including scientific investigation, preventing the spread of disease, and preventing serious damage to property.

Relocating badgers is only permitted where there is considered to be a very low risk of transmitting TB, and before any badgers are released at a new location all animals are tested three times for the disease. All badgers testing positive to any of the three tests, or in contact with a badger testing positive, are euthanased.

Badgers are not relocated as part of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial (the so-called Kreb's trial), and the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB have advised that are no special arrangements relating to the relocation of badgers in trial areas.

Combined Heat and Power

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what incentive she provides for energy companies to set up combined heat and power initiatives; and what assessment she has made of the benefits for consumers. [142039]

Mr. Bradshaw: Incentives introduced recently to encourage CHP schemes include: exemption of Good Quality CHP electricity from the Climate Change Levy; eligibility of Good Quality CHP for Enhanced Capital Allowances and business rates exemption on plant and machinery. Consumers benefit financially from CHP by saving up to 40 per cent. on fuel bills. There are also environmental benefits through reduced carbon emissions. Energy companies can also use CHP as a measure to meet their Energy Efficiency Commitment targets.

Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will take steps to ensure that the knowledge and experience of the management of nuclear materials held by people in West Cumbria are represented on the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management; and if she will make a statement. [142447]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 9 December 2003]*: CoRWM members have been appointed upon the basis advertised on 26 March 2003 and in line with procedures laid down by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. This provided a good field of over 400 candidates for membership, from which we have been able to appoint a strong committee.

CoRWM's task will be to oversee a debate and assessment, involving both the public and stakeholder groups, of the way in which the UK's higher activity radioactive wastes should be managed over the long term and to provide UK Government and devolved administration Ministers with recommendations.

CoRWM is an independent body that itself decides how it conducts its work. But it is clearly important that West Cumbria should be strongly represented in the debate which CoRWM will be launching and overseeing. The committee must deliver recommendations that can be seen to have a broad degree of support, and the views of the people of West Cumbria will be particularly significant given their experience and the stake that they have in the safe management of the UK's radioactive waste. CoRWM is required to take into account all views supplied to it in arriving at its recommendations.

Common Agricultural Policy

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy reform package of 26 June on tenant farmers in the UK. [143553]

Mr. Bradshaw: No specific assessment has been undertaken of the impact of the CAP reform proposals on tenant farmers. However, we have assessed the impacts of the proposals on farming and other businesses generally in England, including an analysis by farm activity, and a summary of these is included in the Regulatory Impact Assessments which have been lodged in the House Libraries. An additional analysis looking at the impact on distribution of payments of various options for operating the Single Payment Scheme has also been carried out and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. Our economists are continuing to analyse the potential impact of different methods of making the Single Payment.

For the first time, the bulk of farm subsidy will not be dependent on what or how much farmers produce. As with the previous system, subsidy would be paid to the farmer, whether owner or tenant, will continue to hold the subsidy entitlement. Tenant farmers, along with other farmers, will therefore be free to produce what they judge the market wants and so be better able to cut costs and increase profits. Farmers will also be freed from some of the bureaucracy associated with the subsidy schemes which are being replaced by the new decoupled subsidy.

Mr. Wills: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total cost of the common agricultural policy in the United Kingdom was to *(a)* consumers and *(b)* taxpayers; and what the costs were to (i) United Kingdom taxpayers and (ii) consumers, broken down by agricultural commodity supported by the common agricultural policy in the most recent year for which figures are available. [144459]

Mr. Bradshaw: The consumer cost of the CAP can be estimated by examining the difference between UK and world prices for agricultural food products. Our latest provisional estimates for 2002 show a cost of the CAP to consumers of around £3.3 billion.

The notional taxpayer contribution to CAP expenditure can also be estimated though, in practice, UK taxpayers contribute to the whole EU budget rather than to specific components. We estimate that, in 2002, this notional cost to UK taxpayers of expenditure under the CAP was around £3.5 billion.

The following table shows an approximate breakdown of consumer support between agricultural commodities. These estimates have, in the main, been compiled using the methodology utilised by the OECD to produce their estimates of the Consumer Support Estimate. It should be noted that the aggregate estimates will be more robust than estimates for the individual commodities. It is particularly difficult to determine the appropriate gap between UK and world prices for products whose specification varies, such as fruit and vegetables, or pigs, eggs and poultry.

£ million

Commodity	*Cost*
Cereals	30
Sugar beet	130
Milk	920
Beef and veal	770
Pigs, eggs and poultry	700
Fruit and vegetables	290
Others	470

UK taxpayers contribute to the entire EU budget rather than to specific programmes. Whilst it is possible to provide an illustrative estimate of the notional contribution to the FEOGA budget, it is not feasible to do so by commodity. However, the following table sets out the share of FEOGA spending by sector.

CAP categories	*Share of expenditure (percentage)*
Arable crops	43
Sugar	3
Oils, fats and protein plants	6
Fruit and vegetables	4
Wine	3
Tobacco	2
Milk products	5
Meat, eggs and poultry	18
Various markets	3
Other operations	3
Rural development	10

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will reply to the letter to her dated 10 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Darren Pennington. [144640]

Alun Michael: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State replied to my right hon. Friend's letter on 23 December 2003.

Crop Areas

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will establish an independent inquiry into errors made by the Department in respect of the wheat area for this year's harvest. [143592]

Mr. Bradshaw: The cause of the error in the estimation of this year's crop areas has already been identified. In using the IACS data to augment the census basis, the mistake was made of mixing up holdings and businesses. It was a simple mistake. A modification has been made to the computer program to ensure that it is not repeated in the future. The department will be working with its independent statistical advisors to improve the system and processes. In the circumstances there is no need to conduct a separate independent inquiry.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will impose penalties on her Department's staff responsible for supplying incorrect details of the wheat area for this year's harvest. [144404]

Mr. Bradshaw: A genuine error was made which was quickly corrected when spotted. The imposition of penalties is not appropriate in these circumstances. Defra operates a formal appraisal system for its staff which involves all aspects of their performance.

Dee Cockle Regulation Order

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects the Dee Cockle Regulation Order to be implemented. [144780]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government will act jointly to make a single Regulating Order under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967 once the prospective grantee, the Environment Agency Wales, is in a position to submit a formal application for the order. The agency is in the process of obtaining written consents from landowners and it will forward an application when these are received.

We will ensure that the application is processed as quickly as possible under the terms of the 1967 Act but the process can take up to two years.

Environmental Taxation

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of GDP is raised in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* each other country belonging to the OECD as environmental taxation, (i) including and (ii) excluding taxation of energy. [143289]

Mr. Morley: The OECD's latest published figures for environmental taxation as a percentage of GDP are given in the following table. The environmental tax estimates include energy taxes but these are not published separately.

Member country	*Environmental taxation as a percentage of GDP in 2001 for each OECD member country*
Australia	1.93
Austria	3.01
Belgium	2.27
Canada	1.33
Czech Republic	2.93
Denmark	4.70
Finland	3.03
France	2.22
Germany	2.58
Greece	2.53
Hungary	2.72
Iceland	2.50
Ireland	2.36
Italy	Not available
Japan	1.74
Korea	3.40
Luxembourg	2.86
Mexico	1.75
Netherlands	3.65
New Zealand	1.57
Norway	3.05
Poland	1.95
Portugal	2.94
Slovak Republic	2.06
Spain	1.89
Sweden	2.80
Switzerland	2.20
Turkey	3.79
United Kingdom	2.85
United States	0.96

Envirowise

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list services offered by Envirowise that are not available from the private sector; what steps she has taken to invite the private sector to undertake services offered by Envirowise; and when they were taken. [144577]

Mr. Morley: Envirowise provides a range of services to business to promote best practice in preventing and minimising waste in all its forms, reducing pollution and making the most effective use of resources. The programme provides the Environment and Energy Helpline; a dedicated website; best practice publications; and on-site visits. All of these services are provided free of charge to UK businesses.

The programme helps companies to recognise the need to improve their efficiency, and gives them sufficient information to start taking action. Companies may then either build on this activity themselves, or engage private sector service providers.

Envirowise services are delivered jointly by two private sector companies through a contract won in open tender, following an invitation to tender published in the *Official Journal* in August 1999. The contract requires more than 50 per cent. of the Programme to be sub-contracted, and the managing contractors use over

200 other contractors each year. This includes over 80 specialist consultants on its Helpline panel, who are appointed through open tender every two years.

Flood Protection

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column 378W, on flood protection, what the relationship of flood defence committees to internal drainage boards is. [145038]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency (EA) is the principal flood defence operating authority in England and Wales. Generally speaking, the EA is empowered under the Water Resources Act 1991 for managing flood risk arising from designated "main" rivers and the sea. The EA is also responsible for flood forecasting and flood warning dissemination, and for exercising a general supervision over matters relating to flood defence.

Regional Flood Defence Committees in England and Wales are made up of Defra, EA and Local Authority appointed members, and they are responsible for undertaking flood defence activities on behalf of the Environment Agency.

Internal drainage boards (IDBs) are statutory bodies, empowered under the Land Drainage Act 1991 to undertake flood defence works for watercourses which have not been designated as "main", in specified districts with special drainage needs.

Although there are no formal relationships or guidance for membership between the RFDCs and IDBs, there is nothing to stop an individual member occupying a position on the committee of both an RFDC and an IDB in their area, and in some instances this is the case.

Food Miles

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what studies her Department has funded since 1997 into food miles; and what the conclusions and recommendations were. [144558]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra has commissioned a group of researchers, led by AEA Technology, to examine the validity of food miles as a quantitative measure of progress in the sustainable development of the farming and food industries. This research is expected to be completed in spring 2004.

Defra has also contributed a small amount of funding, along with other stakeholders, to a Transport 2000 study to model various transport distribution scenarios for a 'basket' of three food products. The study examined whether a shift to sourcing these products more locally would lead to greater or fewer CO^2 emissions in the supply chain overall. Transport 2000 has recently published the results of this work in "Wise Moves—exploring the relationship between food, transport and CO_2".

Food Prices

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average *(a)* farmgate and *(b)* retail price was of (i) one kilogram of (A) beef, (B) lamb, (C) pork, (D) chicken, (E) turkey, (F) bacon, (G) dessert apples, (H) potatoes, (I) carrots, (J) cauliflower, (K) peas, (L) runner beans, (ii) one pint of *(x)* milk, *(y)* cream and *(z)* yoghurt, (iii) one dozen eggs and (iv) one litre of (X) English wine and (Y) brandy in each year since 2000 for which figures are available, broken down by (1) organic and (2) conventionally produced foodstuffs. [144206]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 15 December 2003]:* The farm gate and retail prices of conventionally grown foodstuffs for 2000 to 2002, where available, are shown in the table. Prices are not collected for English wine or brandy. Small quantities of cream and yoghurt are sold to the consumer at retail prices. The amount of processing taking place between farm gate and retail varies from commodity to commodity; an indication is given in the table. Farm gate prices include produce destined for highly processed food, which is normally lower quality and sells at a lower price.

No further information is available for prices of organically produced food.

Conventionally grown produce

			2000 (£)	2001(£)	2002 (£)	Indication of further processing
Beef	Farmgate value *(a)*	£/kg	1.69	1.64	1.70	
	Retail value *(b)*	£/kg	3.80	3.77	3.84	slaughtered, trimmed and cut
Lamb	Farmgate value *(a)*	£/kg	1.90	1.97	2.36	
	Retail value *(b)*	£/kg	4.52	4.78	4.84	slaughtered trimmed and cut
Pork	Farmgate value *(a)*	£/kg	0.95	0.97	0.94	
	Retail value *(b)*	£/kg	2.00	2.21	2.26	slaughtered, trimmed and cut
Chicken	Farmgate value *(c)*	£/kg	0.71	0.70	0.69	
	Retail value *(d)*	£/kg	2.23	2.27	2.24	slaughtered
Turkey	Farmgate value *(c)*	£/kg	1.30	1.24	1.13	
	Retail value	£/kg	n/a	n/a	n/a	slaughtered
Bacon	Farmgate value *(a)*	£/kg	0.95	0.99	0.96	
	Retail value *(b)*	£/kg	3.10	3.55	3.54	slaughtered, trimmed and cut
Apples, dessert	Farmgate value *(e)*	£/kg	0.35	0.36	0.45	
	Retail value *(g)*	£kg	1.08	1.17	1.21	packing and grading where off farm
Potatoes	Farmgate value *(f)*	£/kg	0.08	0.11	0.08	
	Retail value *(h)*	£/kg	0.67	0.41	0.39	packing and grading where off farm
Carrots	Farmgate value *(f)*	£/kg	0.28	0.26	0.18	
	Retail value *(h)*	£/kg	n/a	0.62	0.55	packing and grading where off farm
Cauliflower	Farmgate value *(e)*	£/kg	0.27	0.28	0.34	
	Retail value *(g)*	£/kg	0.57	0.69	0.68	packing and grading where off farm

Conventionally grown produce

			2000 (£)	*2001 (£)*	*2002 (£)*	*Indication of further processing*
Peas for processing	Farmgate value *(e)*	£/kg	0.19	0.20	0.29	
	Retail value *(i)*	£/kg	n/a	1.17	1.12	packing and grading where off farm
Runner beans	Farmgate value *(e)*	£/kg	0.88	0.79	0.77	
	Retail value	£/kg	n/a	n/a	n/a	packing and grading where off farm
Milk	Farmgate value *(j)*	£/pint	0.10	0.11	0.10	
	Retail value *(g)*	£/pint	0.19	0.20	0.23	pasteurised, bottled and transport; shop and delivered
Eggs	Farmgate value *(g)*	£ dozen	0.53	0.55	0.56	
	Retail value *(g)*	£ dozen	1.60	1.53	1.52	packing and grading where off farm

Source:
(a) MLC, Defra
(b) MLC for 2000, other years derived by applying RPI for the item to 2000 value
(c) Average producer price (p/kg carcase weight). *Source:* Agriculture in the United Kingdom, Defra http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/auk/default.asp
(d) Chicken, roasting, fresh. *Source:* ONS
(e) Average farmgate prices for crop years. *Source:* Basic Horticultural Statistics, Defra http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/bhs/default.asp
(f) Agriculture in the United Kingdom, Defra http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/auk/default.asp
(g) ONS
(h) Old white loose potatoes, not including pre-packed. *Source:* ONS
(i) Frozen garden peas, price per 900–910g bag grossed up to £:kg. *Source:* ONS
(j) MMBs, Defra

Foot and Mouth

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much has been spent by her Department in investigating the validity of payment claims submitted by businesses to her Department for work undertaken in connection with the foot and mouth crisis. [145319]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* To date, and from information held centrally, the Department has spent £19.81 million on professional services investigating the validity of payment claims submitted by businesses for the £1.3 billion expenditure on goods, services and works arising out of the 2001 foot and mouth disease outbreak.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many invoices have been settled after the due date by her Department in relation to work undertaken by businesses in connection with the foot and mouth crisis; what the combined value was of the original invoices submitted; and how much interest has been paid on these settlements in accordance with the Late Payment of Debt Act 1998. [145320]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The Department believes that, on the basis of the professional advice it has received, in almost all cases, no due date has arisen because Defra has legitimate grounds for withholding payments. This includes instances where the due date has not yet arisen because the businesses have not provided sufficient and necessary evidence to enable their charges to be verified.

The Department's payment terms are the payment of valid invoices within 30 days of receipt and agreement of valid invoices for goods, services and works requested by the Department. The Department is disputing payment in those cases where it believes on the basis of the quantum, accounting, legal and technical advice it has received that it was overcharged for goods, services and works during the foot and mouth disease outbreak. In all other cases bar the one identified as follows, the Department believes it has paid businesses in accordance with contractually agreed terms for the goods, services and works provided in connection with the outbreak.

The Department believes that the direct cost to the public sector of the expenditure on goods, services and works during the outbreak was £1.3 billion. The Department is still receiving invoices from contractors some 24 to 29 months after the outbreak in 2001. These are the subject of forensic examination and investigation.

To date, the Department has received 11 claims for interest allegedly due on the late payment of commercial debts. These total £132,879.23. Applying the terms of the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 to these claims has resulted in the agreement and payment of £4,057.90 of the claimed sum. All claims are considered on the facts of that claim.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many invoices submitted by businesses to her Department for work undertaken in connection with the foot and mouth crisis have not yet been paid; what the total value is of these unpaid invoices; and how many invoices have been outstanding for a period of more than *(a)* 30 days, *(b)* six months, *(c)* one year and *(d)* two years. [145321]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* Information as to how many invoices submitted to businesses for work undertaken in connection with the foot and mouth disease outbreak have not yet been paid can be provided only at disproportionate cost for the following reasons: the facts of each case are not necessarily similar; some contractors issued few large value invoices; some contractors issued significant numbers of lower value invoices; other contractors submitted statements of account or applications for interim payment; some invoices are rejected in their entirety; other invoices are rejected in part; forensic examination of contractor accounts focuses on the valuation of the entire account.

A large number of businesses received significant payments on account pending final verification of their charges. Other businesses were paid in full or partially

paid in the honest belief at the time that their charges were valid only for subsequent examination and investigation to reveal that legitimate grounds existed and continue to exist for Defra seeking to recover these payments by way of restitutionary proceedings.

Currently, the Department is withholding £55.698 million from businesses in connection with charges arising from the provision of goods services and works during the outbreak. This figure will increase as the Department is continuing to receive invoices from some contractors which the Department on the basis of forensic examination and investigation will not be accepting as valid.

As the Department has paid businesses on the basis of the contractual terms agreed it does not believe there are any valid unpaid and outstanding invoices, submitted by businesses to the Department, for work undertaken in connection with the foot and mouth outbreak.

The Department is disputing payment in those cases where it believes on the basis of the quantum, accounting, technical and legal advice it has received that it was overcharged for goods, services and works during the outbreak. In all other cases, the Department has paid businesses for the goods, services and works provided in connection with the outbreak in 2001.

The Department understands from the Forum of Private Business that the All Party Parliamentary Small Business Group has, or is collecting, evidence that 20 or so contractors are still owed in excess of £10 million for goods, services and works claimed to have been provided during the outbreak in 2001. The Group has pledged it will write to the Department on these cases and Defra will respond once the evidence is to hand.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the average amount of time taken by her Department to investigate the validity of each payment request submitted by a business to her Department for work undertaken in connection with the foot and mouth crisis. [145322]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* I refer the hon. Member to Recommendations 12 and 13 of the National Audit Office Report into 'The 2001 Outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease'. The report can be found on the National Audit Office website at www.nao.gov.uk. I also refer the hon. Member to section (xiii) page 9 of the Fifth Report of Session 2002–03 on 'The 2001 Outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease', issued by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts on 5 March 2003. The Report, together with Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and an Appendix is available at www.parliament.uk.

The Department, along with other Departments in Civil Central Government, reports its payment performance annually to Parliament.

The Department is unable to provide an estimate of the average amount of time taken to investigate the validity of each payment request submitted by a business to the Department for work undertaken in connection with the foot and mouth outbreak. The variable nature of the factors governing the processing of the accounts renders any average figure meaningless. These factors include but are not limited to the following:

(i) the absence of any substantiating evidence on the part of some businesses including the supply of basic records evidencing the work done;

(ii) some businesses refusing to co-operate with the Department in relation to the supply of such information, directly contributing to the time taken to process their accounts, and where such refusal has led to the Department valuing the account on the evidence available to it;

(iii) some businesses seeking payment applying the incorrect contractual rates or being obliged to re-invoice Defra months, and in some cases years, after the original invalid charges;

(iv) the Department is still receiving invoices for alleged work done some 2½ years after the foot and mouth disease outbreak;

(v) the Department is unable to proscribe with certainty the timescales for forensic examination, investigation, litigation and alternative disputes resolution procedures.

The Department has a public law duty to protect the public purse and will do so unfailingly in all circumstances where the evidence is sufficient and necessary to meet legal requirements in either a civil or criminal context.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will introduce vaccination as a means of preventing the spread of foot and mouth disease as part of the Foot and Mouth Contingency Plan. [144177]

Mr. Bradshaw: Prophylactic vaccination remains prohibited under the new EU Directive 2003/85 on the control of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). However, the Directive does give greater prominence to the potential use of emergency vaccination in the event of an outbreak.

The Government's response to the independent inquiries into the 2001 FMD outbreak acknowledged that emergency vaccination would be considered as part of the control strategy from the start of any future outbreak of FMD, where measures additional to culling of susceptible animals on infected premises and dangerous contacts were needed. The latest version of Defra's FMD Contingency Plan includes details on the arrangements that are in place to allow for emergency vaccination in a future outbreak.

Grocery Retailers

Barbara Follett: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the firm concentration ratios, adjusted for buying groups, are for grocery retailers in the European Union. [144027]

Mr. Bradshaw: The latest available estimates of five firm concentration ratios for grocery retailers, adjusted for buying groups, are shown in the following table for individual EU member states and the EU as a whole

Five-firm concentration ratios in grocery retailing, adjusted to include buying groups, 1999

	Market share (percentage points)
Austria	58.6
Belgium/Lux	66.0
Denmark	76.6
Finland	70.5
France	64.7
Germany	52.5
Greece	33.5
Ireland	58.3
Italy	26.4
Netherlands	71.7
Portugal	67.0
Spain	63.7
Sweden	80.6
UK	56.2
EU-15 (weighted average)	60.5

Source:
London Economics

Barbara Follett: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of UK farmers sold direct to retailers in the last month for which figures are available. [144028]

Mr. Bradshaw: The information requested is not available.

Hazardous Waste

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the change in heavy vehicle traffic with hazardous loads following the implementation of the Hazardous Waste Requirements of the Landfill Directive in July 2004. [144913]

Mr. Morley: My right hon. Friend sees the Secretary of State for Transport frequently during which a range of topics is discussed. From July 2004, hazardous waste going to landfill will have to be treated to reduce its volume and/or its hazardous nature, facilitate its handling or enhance recovery. Over time, implementation of the Landfill Directive will also encourage greater wasteminimisation at source.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the impact of the Hazardous Waste Requirements of the Landfill Directive on residue disposal options for the metal recycling sector. [144914]

Mr. Morley: A number of very constructive meetings have been held with metals recycling interests to discuss disposal of residues. Those interests are also represented on the Hazardous Waste Forum. Options for dealing with residue disposal have been identified and these are being considered by the industry. As the Government is committed to reducing the UK's reliance on landfill, which makes little practical use of waste and is a missed opportunity to recover value from waste, it wishes to do all it can to encourage and support the recycling sector.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the top 20 producers of hazardous waste by mass; and what the extent is of their in-house disposal facilities. [144915]

Mr. Morley: The top twenty producers of hazardous waste by mass in England and Wales are listed below. The amounts involved are of waste consigned and therefore not going to in-house facilities. Data on waste going to in-house facilities is only held by the Environment Agency in an aggregated form.

Airbus UK, Chester
Baker Refractories, Worksop, Nottinghamshire
Beckton Gas Works, London
Blueprint, Portsmouth
Castle Waste Services Ltd, Derbyshire
Centre of Excellence, Rainham, Essex
Fine Organics Ltd, Middlesbrough
Former Gasworks, Cambridge
Imco Recycling UK Ltd, Swansea
Kane Haulage Ltd, Felsted
Lattice Property, Bradford
Milford Haven Dock, Dyfed
Pembroke Dock, Dyfed
Rugby Cement, Rugby
Safety Kleen UK Ltd, Dinnington, Sheffield
Solvent Resource Management Ltd, North Shields, Tyne and Wear
Solvent Resource Management Ltd, Morecambe
Taylor Woodrow Construction, Newcastle upon Tyne
Waste Recycling Group, Sheffield
Wyeth-Ayerst Ltd, Gosport, Hants

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the actions taken to meet the hazardous waste requirements of the Landfill Directive by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* those departments which previously held responsibility. [144916]

Mr. Morley: Actions taken by this Department and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to implement the 1999 Landfill Directive in England on diverting waste from landfill include:

preparation and issue of Waste Strategy 2000;

six rounds of public consultation on aspects of the Landfill Directive;

setting up four stakeholders groups—including the Hazardous Waste Forum, and the Landfill Directive Implementation Group which is looking at the implementation of the Council Decision on waste acceptance criteria;

the Hazardous Waste Forum has published an action plan on the reduction and environmentally sound management of hazardous waste;

guidance material issued by the Environment Agency;

organising seminars and taking part in those organised by others (e.g. the Environmental Services Association and the Chemical Industries Association);

bilateral meetings with a wide range of industry and other interests;

commissioning research and other projects (either direct or though the Hazardous Waste Forum or the Environment Agency);

setting up the Waste and Resources Action Programme to develop markets for recycled materials (so diverting waste away from landfill);

introducing the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund to support projects that use waste materials (e.g. construction and demolition waste) to replace primary aggregates.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what action the Government is taking to ensure that small businesses do not dispose of hazardous waste in the domestic waste stream following implementation of the Hazardous Waste Requirements of the Landfill Directive. [144917]

Mr. Morley: The Hazardous Waste Forum is producing an action plan that includes educating waste producers on their responsibilities. The Environment Agency is responsible for regulating waste legislation and it too will seek to ensure that all producers of hazardous waste act in a responsible manner.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of hazardous waste was non-reactive in the last year for which figures are available. [144918]

Mr. Morley: This information is not available. The Environment Agency collects and records hazardous waste information that is provided by site operators. The Special Waste Regulations 1996 (as amended) do not require producers of special or hazardous waste to record whether or not waste being produced or disposed of is non-reactive.

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the delay to the start of the landfill allowance trading scheme until 2005–06, including reference to the reasons for the delay; what assessment was made of the impact of the delay on the ability of the United Kingdom to meet the targets in the Landfill Directive; and what further steps have been taken to form a policy on whether or not to fine waste disposal authorities that fail to meet their landfill allowance targets. [143090]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 9 December 2003]*: The decision to delay the implementation of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme until 2005 which was announced by the Minister of State for Local and Regional Government on 19 November 2003, was made to help reduce spending pressures on local government in 2004–05. It does, however, reflect the views of local authorities which we have received through our consultation on the implementation of the Scheme, that they needed more time to prepare for this new Scheme which is a significant departure from their normal operations. The delay in starting the scheme will mean that waste disposal authorities will have to make steeper annual reductions in the amount of biodegradable waste they landfill in order to meet the first target year of 2010 but they will have more time to plan how to do this.

Policy on the remaining issues included in the consultation on the Scheme will be decided once all of the responses have been fully analysed and will be announced in the New Year.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Government will set a ceiling on trading prices for landfill allowances. [144912]

Mr. Morley: No. The Government does not consider it appropriate to set a maximum price for allowances as this may lead to market distortion. However, the financial penalty for holding fewer allowances than the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled will act as a de-facto ceiling because local authorities are unlikely to purchase allowances if they cost more than the price of paying the penalty.

Livestock Disposal

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on progress towards the setting up of the livestock disposal scheme indicating what level of interest there has been in participating; and what particular measures are being considered to include the pig and poultry industry. [144929]

Mr. Bradshaw: It is still the intention that the National Fallen Stock Scheme should begin early in the new year. It is too early to judge the likely interest in participation, but the scheme has the full backing of the farming organisations and it should save money for farmers who would otherwise have to make their own disposal arrangements. Conditions for the pig and poultry industry will need to reflect the particular requirements of the intensive sector.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on what business form the Livestock Disposal Agency will take; and what relationship exists between the Government and the National Farmers' Union. [144930]

Mr. Bradshaw: The National Fallen Stock Scheme will be run by a Company limited by guarantee, initially owned by Defra and the Devolved Administrations. Its long term structure will need further discussion with the livestock industry as the intention is to transfer ownership in due course. Both the Government and the National Farmers' Union are committed to a partnership approach to developing and running the Scheme.

Orchard Fruit Survey

Hugh Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the results were of the Orchard Fruit Survey, in hectares of fruit trees, for each of the six years to July 2003. [143919]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: The table shows the total tree area (including apples, pears, plums, cherries and other top fruit) of the Orchard Fruit Surveys 1998–2003.

Orchard Fruit Survey, England and Wales

	Total tree area (hectares)
1998	21,981
1999	21,483
2000	20,823
2001	21,104
2002	18,739
2003	17,671

Parasiticides

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment her Department has made of the *(a)* use and *(b)* resistance to anthelmintics in the UK; and if she will make a statement on (i) anthelmintics, (ii) flukicides and (iii) similar Pharmacy and Merchants List drugs being under veterinary dispensing control. [145222]

Mr. Bradshaw: Data on use of veterinary medicines is not normally collected, although the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) were involved in a survey on liver flukes and the use of flukicides in August 2002. The VLA have also conducted a number of related investigations over the past 20 years as part of MAFF and Defra funded research into resistance to anthelmintics. These have found that in the UK resistance is most commonly seen in sheep and goat nemotodes. Defra is currently funding a research project entitled "The development of computerised models for use in integrated parasite control strategies designed to optimise anthelmintic usage".

In addition, the sheep industry has been involved in producing some short-term strategies to slow the development of anthelmintic resistance in internal parasites of sheep in the UK and a leaflet on the subject is on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/control/parasite_control.htm

In the sheep industry, anthelmintics are widely used because diseases such as parasitic gastroenteritis are economically important and avoidance of anthelmintic resistance is a high priority. The strategies aim to reduce use by means of more targeted applications, which at the same time may limit the development of resistance.

Before a marketing authorisation for a veterinary medicinal product is granted, applicants must submit data which among other requirements must demonstrate that the product is efficacious under the proposed dose regime. This is scientifically assessed and potential future resistance is considered as part of this assessment. There are currently some 300 medicinal products authorised as anthelmintics and an additional 11 which also are authorised as flukicides. Less than 60 per cent. of these are supplied under the Pharmacy and Merchants List. There is no evidence that the route of supply of individual products has any effect on resistance.

Pesticides

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what *(a)* minutes or other records were taken and *(b)* decisions were made at the Pesticide Safety Directorate stakeholder meetings on (i) 13 October and (ii) 24 October. [146089]

Alun Michael: Meetings were arranged with key stakeholders to discuss the issues raised by the informal consultation exercise on public access to information on pesticide use.

Attendees were invited to give their views and suggestions concerning the type of system that might be introduced to notify residents of forthcoming spray activities (including the form any notification would take and the period before use when notification should be given). They were also asked how access might be provided to those wishing to see records of past spray activities.

Notes were taken of the views of attendees and the practical suggestions they made. These are being considered, alongside the written submissions made in response to the informal consultation.

Plant Imports

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether she will seek *(a)* sanctions against and *(b)* compensation from (i) the Netherlands and (ii) other nations found to have failed adequately to check the infectivity of plants exported to the UK for commercial sale. [143664]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* A Defra plant health official and an industry nominee recently made a visit to the Netherlands, at the invitation of the Dutch plant health authorities, to see how new EC measures against "Phytophthora ramorum" were being implemented. The visit has been the subject of misleading reports in the press. Boskoop, the main venue for sale of nursery stock in the Netherlands, was found to be fully compliant. At Aalsmeer, which is primarily a flower market, some consignments of plants were losing their plant passports when they were split up and sold on; a shortcoming which the Dutch plant heath authorities have agreed to address. Our surveillance of plants moving in trade, including those from the Netherlands, is being stepped up and plants found not to comply will continue to be destroyed.

Collaboration between Forestry Commission scientists and their Dutch and German counterparts helped in 2001 to establish the link between dying trees in California and a new but minor disease on rhododendrons in Europe.

We do not know how or where the pathogen arrived in Europe. Of the 330 UK findings, 70 per cent. have been on plants originating within this country, rather than imports. I do not believe it is appropriate at this stage to seek sanctions or compensation from the other countries with whom we are working to deal with this threat to European trees. The first recourse for someone who has received infected plants should be their supplier.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what action her Department will take to protect *(a)* garden centres and *(b)* growers from imported plants infected with the tree fungus *Phytophthora ramorum.* [143667]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* Measures are already in place to help prevent garden centres and growers from importing plant material susceptible to the pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum.* These included, banning the import of host plants from affected areas of the USA and extending current controls on imported oak wood to include wood that comes from host trees in affected areas in the USA. All other susceptible plant material imported into the UK from third countries must be accompanied by a

phytosanitary certificate. For trade within the EC, all consignments of rhododendron and viburnum must be accompanied by a plant passport.

The European Community's Standing Committee on Plant Health recently reviewed these measures and agreed that they should continue. Commission officials are now working on a draft to strengthen the current Decision. In addition, the UK will be stepping up its inspection of plant material entering the UK to ensure it complies with import arrangements. Any consignment entering the UK that is found not to possess the required documentation is destroyed.

River Trent

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the progress of the fluvial strategy for the River Trent. [145207]

Mr. Morley: I understand from the Environment Agency that they expect to consult on a draft of the River Trent Strategy in early spring 2004, and that they have provided you directly with a detailed progress report.

Rural Services

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary legislation which would have to be amended fully to implement the proposals contained in Lord Haskin's report on the Delivery of Rural Services. [145788]

Alun Michael: The Secretary of State set out the Government's initial response to Lord Haskins' Review of Rural Delivery in November 2003. She said that she hoped to publish a detailed implementation plan for the proposals in the spring. The work being undertaken to develop that plan includes consideration of the detailed legal implications of the proposals, and changes to legislation will need to be addressed as part of the implementation plan.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Government are on target to ensure that 95 per cent. of all sites of special scientific interest are in a favourable condition by 2010. [145250]

Mr. Bradshaw: English Nature completed the first six year cycle of condition assessments for every SSSI in England in 2003, launching its report on this work on 15 December. This contains a wealth of information on the factors affecting SSSI condition. This information base is essential in setting a course for future progress towards the target. We aim to do this by the spring of next year, and to assess future progress against that course thereafter.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to change the number of sites of special scientific interest in England. [145251]

Mr. Bradshaw: The notification of sites of special scientific interest is entirely a matter for English Nature in the exercise of its statutory functions. Significant improvements to the legislative framework brought about by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 now enable English Nature to also extend sites and to de-notify sites where they are no longer of special interest.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what funding was available for the *(a)* protection and *(b)* promotion of sites of special scientific interest in each of the past three years; and how much will be available for (i) 2003–04 and (ii) 2004–05. [145252]

Mr. Bradshaw: Conservation of sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) depends on raising awareness of issues and fostering partnerships with 32,000 owner/occupiers. A wide range of programmes contribute to the protection of SSSIs, including agri-environment schemes, water company investment, Government Departments' estate management and grant funding of National Park Authorities. It is not practicable to provide a breakdown of spending on SSSIs as specifically requested.

However, English Nature's direct expenditure on management agreements and maintenance of SSSIs is reported in its annual reports. The figures, including for those that are also National Nature Reserves, are £11.8 million in 2000–01, £13.5 million in 2001–02 and £14 million in 2002–03. Its forecast spend in 2003–04 is £15.9 million. Plans for 2004–05 have not been settled.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the sites of special scientific interest in the Vale of York. [145253]

Mr. Bradshaw: The list of sites of special scientific interest, either wholly or partly in the Vale of York is as follows:

SSSI Name	*SSSI Area in Vale of York (ha)*	*Total SSSI Area (ha)*
Aubert Ings	10.68	10.68
Birkham Wood	26.20	29.35
Bishop Monkton Ings	10.32	38.13
Dalby Bush Fen	1.61	7.50
Farnham Mires	10.32	10.32
Gormire	54.48	54.48
Hack Fall Wood	0.13	42.98
Kirk Deighton	4.03	4.03
Newsome Bridge Quarry	1.57	1.57
North York Moors	73.65	44,082.40
Pilmoor	45.02	45.02
Ripon Parks	26.11	129.74
River Ure Bank, Ripon Parks	0.05	1.74
Shaws Gate Quarry	0.83	1.45
Snape Hill Quarry	0.58	0.58
Upper Dunsforth Carrs	10.09	10.09
Total	275.67	—

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on sites of special scientific interest. [145254]

Mr. Bradshaw: The protection of over one million hectares of England's finest wildlife and geological heritage in over 4,000 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) is an essential component of the Government's approach to conserving biodiversity, as set out in "Working with the Grain of Nature"—the England biodiversity strategy.

The wide range of factors affecting the SSSIs mean that their condition is a clear indicator of success in achieving sustainable development. That is why their condition is also an indicator of progress in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy "A Better Quality of Life", Defra's own sustainable development strategy "Foundations for our Future", and the Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food. The Government has a target to bring 95 per cent. of SSSIs into favourable condition by 2010, and is working with English Nature and others to bring this about.

Substitute Fuels

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what substances are prohibited from qualifying as substitute fuels under the Environment Agency's Substitute Fuels Protocol; what changes are planned to the list of qualifying substances; and if she will make a statement [142346]

Mr. Morley: An operator of an industrial installation or plant wishing to burn a fuel of a type not within the terms of the current operating permit or authorisation has to apply to the Environment Agency for a variation to allow trials to be conducted. Each variation application is determined by the Environment Agency on a case-by-case basis, and the Substitute Fuels Protocol provides guidance to its staff and operators on the application process.

Under the current version of the protocol, trials of a fuel containing the following should not be allowed:

(a) a radioactive material or radioactive waste as defined in Sections 1 and 2 respectively of the Radioactive Substances Act 1993; or

(b) an explosive including: propellants, cartridges, or bombs, or explosive material extracted from them or explosive-contaminated material from their manufacture or decommissioning.

Additionally, trials of a fuel to which any of the following substances has been added should not be allowed:

polychlorinated biphenyls;

pentachlorophenol;

pharmaceuticals;

pesticides;

biocides; and

iodine compounds.

The Environment Agency plans to undertake a full public consultation on proposed revisions to the Substitute Fuels Protocol. When the consultation document is published within the next few weeks, it will be available for comment for three months. The protocol may then be revised, taking into account the comments received during the consultation period.

Sudden Oak Death

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has made to her counterparts in EU member states about the recent UK outbreak of sudden oak death. [143606]

Mr. Bradshaw: Dialogue on "Phytophthora ramorum" takes place between officials on a regular basis and particularly during discussion in the European Community's Standing Committee on Plant Health. It was as the result of collaboration between UK, Dutch and German plant health services that the risks were identified and emergency measures against the introduction and spread of "Phytophthora ramorum" introduced throughout the EU in November 2002. These measures were reviewed by the Standing Committee on 11 December. Following the findings of the disease in tree species the UK made very clear its concerns about the spread of this disease and agreement was reached for the control measures to continue. Commission officials are now working on a draft proposal to strengthen the current Decision.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with the Plant Health Laboratory concerning the recent UK outbreak of sudden oak death. [143607]

Mr. Bradshaw: The plant health group at Defra's Central Science Laboratory is an important part of the UK's plant health service. The Laboratory confirmed the first finding of "Phytophthora ramorum" in the UK in April 2002. Their scientific assessment of risk and input into discussions on exclusion, eradication and containment is a continuous process and has proved invaluable in formulating our views on this particular disease since the risk was first identified in 2001. They are also involved in or leading many of the research projects which will help the development of plant health policy, risk management, and decisions on action taken. In many aspects of this work they collaborate closely with the Forest Research Agency.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the origins of the recent UK outbreak of sudden oak death. [143608]

Mr. Bradshaw: Phytophthora ramorum was first described as a new species in October 2001 and first found in the UK in April 2002. Surveys are being conducted to establish how widespread the disease is and this may give an indication of how many years it may have been present. There have been over 300 outbreaks of Phytophthora ramorum found in England and Wales, mostly on rhododendrons and viburnums. In 70 per cent. of these cases the plants were of UK origin. In most of the other cases plants had been imported from other EC member states. In each of the cases on trees, there had already been findings of the disease nearby on plants of the rhododendron family.

The current scientific view is that the pathogen was probably introduced separately to California and to Europe from its place of origin, possibly the Far East.

Investigations of past imports are continuing but it is unlikely that the original source, or the time and place of introduction, will be identified with certainty.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures are being taken to prevent the destruction of Britain's oak trees from indigenous fungal diseases. [143512]

Mr. Bradshaw: Fortunately, there are only a few indigenous tree diseases which can affect oak trees to any significant extent. The main one is known as oak dieback, a complex disease in which a number of damaging agents interact to bring about a deterioration in tree condition. The Forestry Commission's Forest Research Agency is participating in a wide ranging European research programme which aims to gain new insights into the disease. The principal effort is being directed towards understanding the importance of the killing of fine roots by fungi in the genus Phytophthora. Further details are given in the commission's information note 'Dieback of Pendunculate Oak' which can be seen on the commission's website, www.forestry.gov.uk.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what mechanisms regulate garden centres and horticultural activities in respect of the control of the phytophthora ramorum fungus and the protection of keystone tree species; and what emergency measures are being taken to prevent the import of diseases affecting trees. [143515]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Plant Health Order (Phytophthora ramorum) (England) (No. 2) Order 2002, implementing EC emergency measures, came into force on 1 November 2002. Plants of susceptible species moving within the EC must meet plant passporting requirements and member states have been required to carry out surveys to help detect the spread of the disease.

Defra's Plant Health and Seeds Inspectors are undertaking checks at nurseries and garden centres known to trade in susceptible species. If infected plants are found in nurseries or garden centres during these inspections or surveys the legislation allows Inspectors to serve notice requiring the material to be destroyed along with any plants of susceptible species within 2 metres. Susceptible plants within 10 metres are placed on hold for a period to ascertain whether the disease is present before they can be moved.

Veterinary Surgeons

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many *(a)* large animal and *(b)* small animal veterinary surgeons practise in the UK. [146094]

Mr. Bradshaw: There is no such thing as a large or small animal vet as all veterinary surgeons are qualified to deal with any type of animal. At the last count (March 2003) there were approximately 12,000 veterinary surgeons in full time practice in the UK.

In April 2003 The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), submitted evidence to the EFRA Select Committee inquiry into Vets and Veterinary services which showed that there are 2,375 main veterinary practices in the UK, of which 964 (41 per cent.) were farm practices.

In the 2002 Manpower survey of how veterinary time was devoted to different areas of practice, it was reported that vets in general practice devoted 80.1 per cent. of their time to small animals, 5 per cent. to horses, 6.7 per cent. to cattle, 1.3 per cent. to sheep, 0.3 to pigs and 0.1 to poultry.

Warm Front Programme

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will extend the entitlement to central heating installation under the Warm Front scheme when a heating system still operates but is inadequate. [145683]

Mr. Morley: Following recent reviews of Warm Front and a stakeholder event held in November 2003, we are considering the options for the future format of the Scheme. This includes consideration of the rules surrounding boiler replacements.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has made to the Treasury regarding the adequacy of funding proposals for the Warm Front programme. [145759]

Mr. Morley: Future funding of the Warm Front scheme will be considered in 2004 as part of the normal Government Spending Round process.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress she is making on improving the Warm Front scheme to combat fuel poverty. [145001]

Mr. Bradshaw: Following recent reviews of Warm Front and a stakeholder event held in November, we are now in the process of considering the options for the future format of Warm Front.

We expect to make decisions on the future form of the scheme during early 2004.

Waste and Resources Action Programme

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on ways in which the Waste and Resources Action Programme has contributed to the reduction of global warming. [143285]

Mr. Morley: The Waste and Resources Action Programme's aim is to promote sustainable waste management by working to create stable and efficient markets for recycled materials and products and removing the barriers to waste minimisation, re-use and recycling.

Attributing reductions in global warming (reductions in greenhouse gas emissions) to increases in recycling rate is an extremely complex area of research due to the number of variables to be taken into account. However, preliminary research undertaken by the Waste and Resources Action Programme indicates that using secondary materials (recycling) results in substantial energy savings when compared with production using primary materials. This initial assessment also suggests

that if 30 per cent. of municipal solid waste is recycled in 2010 a reduction of approximately 10–15 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent gas could be achieved in the world.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many people are employed by the Waste and Resources Action Programme; and what additional recruitment is planned. [142592]

Mr. Morley: The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) currently employs 73 people, the majority of whom work on its core market development remit to promote sustainable waste management and to create stable and efficient markets for recycled materials and products.

In May 2003 WRAP'S remit was extended in England, as part of Government's response to the Strategy Unit report "Waste Not, Want Not", to include a household waste minimisation programme; an organics market development programme to provide material specific support and investment to the composting sector; the development of a kerbside recycling advisory service to local authorities and a targeted waste awareness programme combining national and local elements.

As a result of these new programmes, recruitment plans will take WRAP to a projected full-time equivalent headcount figure of up to 140 by mid 2004. The increase in staff resources is in proportion to the increase in Government funding allocated to WRAP.

Waste Management

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the 47th Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union, on European Union Waste Management Policy, and on its recommendations. [144576]

Mr. Morley: The Government are currently considering the report on European Union Waste Management Policy and will respond in due course.

Wessex Flood Defence Committee

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total budget for the Wessex Flood Defence Committee is for financial year 2003–04. [145763]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency is required to arrange for its flood defence functions, except for certain financial ones, to be carried out by Regional Flood Defence Committees (RFDCs). The RFDC may arrange for all or any of these functions to be carried out by Local Flood Defence Committees (LFDCs) under a scheme approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I understand from the agency that the total budget for the LFDCs overseen by the Wessex RFDC for the financial year 2003–04 is £27.2 million.

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much the Chairman of the Wessex Flood Defence Committee received in *(a)* pay and *(b)* reimbursement of expenses in 2003–04; and what overseas trips he undertook on official business in 2003–04. [145766]

Mr. Morley: The previous Chairman of the Wessex Regional Flood Defence Committee (RFDC) received the following amounts, from the beginning of the current financial year (1 April 2003) to the end of his term of appointment on 30 June 2003:

(a) pay: £3,797.49

(b) expenses: £981.62

No overseas trips were undertaken on Environment Agency business.

The current Chairman of the Wessex RFDC has received the following amounts since his appointment began on 1 July 2003:

(a) pay: £9,627.16 (including £2,032.18 in respect of his Chairmanship of Somerset Local Flood Defence Committee (LFDC) until 6 October 2003)

(b) expenses £1,882.80 (some of which relates to Somerset LFDC duties)

No overseas trips were undertaken on Environment Agency business.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Asylum Seekers

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many asylum seekers aged under 18 are in the care of social services, broken down by local authority. [144974]

Margaret Hodge: Information is not collected centrally in relation to all types of asylum seekers aged under 18. However information is available in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).

The information in respect of UASC is shown for 2002, the most recent year for which figures are available.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after at 31 March 2002 aged under 18 by local authority

Local authority	*Number*
England	2,200
Barking and Dagenham	110
Barnet	25
Barnsley	0
Bath and North East Somerset	—
Bedfordshire	—
Bexley	10
Birmingham	10
Blackburn and Darwen	0
Blackpool	0
Bolton	0
Bournemouth	0
Bracknell Forest	—
Bradford	0
Brent	60
Brighton and Hove	—
Bristol	—
Bromley	5
Buckinghamshire	—
Bury	—
Calderdale	0
Cambridgeshire	10

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after at 31 March 2002 aged under 18 by local authority

Local authority	*Number*
Camden	55
Cheshire	0
City of London	—
Cornwall	0
Coventry	0
Croydon	235
Cumbria	0
Darlington	0
Derby	—
Derbyshire	—
Devon	0
Doncaster	0
Dorset	—
Dudley	—
Durham	0
Ealing	10
East Riding of Yorkshire	—
East Sussex	—
Enfield	25
Essex	5
Gateshead	0
Gloucestershire	—
Greenwich	35
Hackney	—
Halton	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	90
Hampshire	—
Haringey	95
Harrow	15
Hartlepool	0
Havering	10
Herefordshire	0
Hertfordshire	—
Hillingdon	155
Hounslow	15
Isle of Wight	—
Isles of Scilly	0
Islington	80
Kensington and Chelsea	75
Kent	195
Kingston upon Hull	—
Kingston upon Thames	—
Kirklees	—
Knowsley	0
Lambeth	120
Lancashire	0
Leeds	—
Leicester	—
Leicestershire	—
Lewisham	35
Lincolnshire	—
Liverpool	—
Luton	10
Manchester	5
Medway Towns	0
Merton	10
Middlesbrough	0
Milton Keynes	10
Newcastle upon Tyne	—
Newham	50
Norfolk	15
North East Lincs	5
North Lincolnshire	0
North Somerset	0
North Tyneside	—
North Yorkshire	—
Northamptonshire	0
Northumberland	0
Nottingham	—
Nottinghamshire	—
Oldham	0
Oxfordshire	25
Peterborough	0
Plymouth	0
Poole	—
Portsmouth	—
Reading	—
Redbridge	30
Redcar and Cleveland	0
Richmond upon Thames	35
Rochdale	0
Rotherham	0
Rutland	0
Salford	0
Sandwell	—
Sefton	—
Sheffield	5
Shropshire	0
Slough	10
Solihull	—
Somerset	0
South Gloucestershire	—
South Tyneside	0
Southampton	—
Southend	0
Southwark	50
St. Helens	0
Staffordshire	—
Stockport	—
Stockton on Tees	0
Stoke-on-Trent	—
Suffolk	—
Sunderland	0
Surrey	20
Sutton	5
Swindon	—
Tameside	0
Telford and Wrekin	—
Thurrock	40
Torbay	0
Tower Hamlets	0
Trafford	—
Wakefield	5
Walsall	0
Waltham Forest	40
Wandsworth	10
Warrington	—
Warwickshire	10
West Berkshire	0
West Sussex	125
Westminster	55
Wigan	0
Wiltshire	—
Windsor and Maidenhead	0
Wirral	0
Wokingham	0
Wolverhampton	0
Worcestershire	0
York	0

Notes:

1. All figures rounded to the nearest five
2. '—'Indicates number between one and five that has been suppressed for reasons of confidentiality
3. Table excludes any children looked after under a series of short term placements

Source:

CLA100 return

Children in Care

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children aged up to three months entered local authority care in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [141835]

Margaret Hodge: The figures available provide a snapshot at March 31 2002. At 31 March 2002 there were 390 children aged nought to three months looked after by local authorities in England.

Data for 2003 is currently being evaluated and will be available in March 2004.

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the average age of a child entering local authority care was in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [141838]

Margaret Hodge: The figures available provide a snapshot at 31 March 2002. The average age of the children looked after by local authorities at 31 March 2002 is 10 years and 6 months. Data for 2003 is currently being evaluated and will be available in March 2004.

Adoption

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of adoption placements were terminated within the first year in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [143349]

Margaret Hodge: In the year ending 31 March 2002, 7 per cent. of placements for adoption ended without the making of an adoption order.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps are being taken to reduce administrative delays in the system for placing children for adoption. [143363]

Margaret Hodge: The National Adoption Standards for England have set timescales to ensure that each looked after child has a plan for permanence agreed at the four month statutory review, and where adoption is the plan, timescales for finding an adoptive family.

The Adoption Register for England and Wales has been set up as a tool for helping to match children in need of adoption with approved adopters. It has been fully operational in England since April 2002 and in Wales since August 2002.

The Government are committed to supporting local adopter recruitment activity, and has developed an Adopter Recruitment Toolkit for adoption agencies. The Government continues to support national recruitment activity through National Adoption Week. The Government made a further £60,000 available to support National Adoption Week 2003 following a grant of £60,000 in 2002 and £50,000 in 2001.

Since 2001, adoption work in the county courts and above has been centralised in specialist Adoption Centres throughout England and Wales. The objective of specialist adoption centres is to improve the service for everyone involved in adoption by dealing with contested and uncontested cases quickly and efficiently in centres with specialist adoption judges and staff.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many adoption placements have been completed in each local authority during each of the last five years. [143364]

Margaret Hodge: The table showing the number of looked after children adopted in each local authority in England, during the years ending 31 March 1998 to 2002, has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children are awaiting adoption in each local authority area. [143365]

Margaret Hodge: The table showing the number of looked after children in England recorded on the Adoption Register for England and Wales who are awaiting a match with prospective adoptive parents at 10 December 2003, has been placed in the Library.

Antisocial Behaviour

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what provisions have been made to include education programmes in strategies designed to cope with anti-social behaviour. [144093]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Education-related programmes play a crucial part in our drive to tackle anti-social behaviour in three ways.

The first is through the school curriculum, where pupils learn about socially responsible behaviour as part of Citizenship education. This is a statutory subject in secondary schools. Schools receive guidance on helping pupils to understand the impact of anti-social behaviour and deal with it assertively.

The second is through a range of measures to reduce truancy, improve pupil behaviour in schools and reinforce parental responsibility for their children's behaviour in schools. They include national truancy sweeps, fast track to prosecution for truancy, in-school Learning Support Units, multi-agency Behaviour and Education Support Teams, key workers for children at risk of crime, police in schools and positive activity programmes in the school holidays. In addition the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, which comes into force at the end of February, will introduce penalty notices for truancy, parenting contracts for truancy and parenting contracts and orders for bad behaviour in schools.

The third is through services for young people beyond the school. The Connexions service provides access to personal development opportunities to broaden horizons and develop talents. The Youth service develops young people's ability to make responsible choices and engage constructively with their community. Both services help young people to develop their ability to cope with the issues which affect them and to avoid falling into anti-social behaviour.

Broadband

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on progress on the extension of broadband connection to *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools. [144935]

Mr. Charles Clarke: The Prime Minister announced in November 2002 that all schools should be connected to broadband by 2006.

There is good progress towards meeting this commitment. The most recent broadband connectivity statistics, from the end August 2003, reveal that 42 per cent. of all schools in England were connected to broadband at 2Megabits per second or faster (Mbps). 91 per cent. of secondary schools and 34 per cent. of primary schools were connected to broadband at this time.

CAFCASS

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which member of the CAFCASS Board has refused to resign. [144973]

Margaret Hodge: Judy Weleminsky is the member of the CAFCASS Board who declined to resign.

Child Care

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the definition is of approved child care. [144708]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* The Tax Credits Act 2002 allows parents using approved child care to claim for help with the costs of that child care through the tax credit system. Details of the types of care that are approved for this purpose can be found in the Inland Revenue leaflet—"WCT5—Help with the costs of child care". Copies of the leaflet can be found in the House of Commons Library.

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many parents make use of approved child care. [145446]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* In 2002 the Department published the Repeat Study of Parental Demand for Childcare. This provides information about the use of early years and child care providers by parents with children aged 14 and under in England.

Just over half of families (52 per cent. or 2.76 million) had used either early years education or some other formal child care provider (registered childminders, creche/nursery provider, out of school clubs and holiday schemes) in the past year. Almost a third (32 per cent.) reported using this type of provision in the past week.

Child Protection

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how he proposes to recruit inspectors for departments concerned with child protection; and who will pay for them. [145027]

Margaret Hodge: My right hon. Friend is not responsible for the recruitment of inspectors. Recruitment and payment of inspectors are matters for the bodies which employ them.

Child Trust Fund

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what discussions he has had with financial companies about the assistance they can provide to schools to improve financial literacy, with particular reference to the child trust fund; [145712]

(2) if he will increase the amount of financial education given to children in the national curriculum, with particular regard to work related to the child trust fund; [145714]

(3) what discussions his Department has had with teachers' unions about the introduction of child trust funds and the need for increased provision of financial education in schools. [145718]

Mr. Miliband: The Department has had discussions with a range of companies about supporting schools to improve numeracy and financial literacy, but none specifically in relation to the child trust fund. Personal finance education is covered in the curriculum as part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship framework, and through subjects such as mathematics. Guidance issued in July 2000 encourages schools to involve local banks and building societies who may be able to provide resources or advice.

It is for schools to determine the amount of time to be given to specific topics within the curriculum and the Department has no plans to recommend to schools that the amount of financial education should be increased.

No discussions have been held between the Department and teachers' unions about the introduction of child trust funds and increased provision for financial education.

Children and Young People's Unit

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on his joint working with the Home Office's Children and Young People's Unit and the development and delivery of shared initiatives with particular reference to the Participation Fund; and how such funds have affected Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East. [144768]

Margaret Hodge: The Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU)—previously a Unit located within the DfES but reporting to a Home Office Minister—is now part of the new DfES Children, Young People and Families Directorate, reporting to me. The valuable work pioneered by the CYPU in developing cross-Government initiatives, in supplying local partnerships and in involving children and young people in policy development will be incorporated in the work of my new Directorate.

The Participation Fund is a small fund designed to support the development of mechanisms for the consultation and involvement of children and young people in England. Part of this budget is devoted to a Consultation Fund, which I launched in July this year. Its purpose is to provide opportunities for children and young people, in particular those in hard-to-reach groups, to be consulted on policies and services that affect them. No projects have yet been funded in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, but applications would be welcome (application details at www.cypu.gov.uk/participation/consultationfund.cfm).

Children's Registers

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what arrangements are in place for children in the UK to be included on *(a)* national and *(b)* local registers. [145026]

Margaret Hodge: The Queen's Speech said that a Bill will be introduced to improve services designed to protect children. Subject to the outcome of consultation on the "Every Child Matters" Green Paper, this will include proposals for establishing local information sharing systems to enable practitioners to share early relevant information about children and young people where this will enable better services to be provided to them and their families.

There are no plans for children to be included on a national register.

City Acadamies

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to the answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 659–60W, on city academies, how the funding is broken down between the three categories set out in his answer. [145243]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 5 January 2004]*: The figure of £215.3 million set out in Section A of the Winter Supplementary Estimate 2003–04 breaks down as follows:

Academy building refurbishment and construction costs—£167.9 million;

Academies annual recurrent costs paid in general annual grant by the Secretary of State (including, where appropriate, start-up costs)—£38.3 million; and

General administrative expenditure incurred by the Department in the running of the programme (including project feasibility and implementation costs)—£9.1 million.

The second figure of £11.3 million set out in Section J of the Winter Supplementary Estimate 2003–04 breaks down as follows:

Standards Fund grant paid to Academies by local education authorities—£11.3 million.

Delegated Expenditure

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of the *(a)* total expenditure on education and *(b)* total expenditure on schools in each local education authority was delegated to schools in each of the last five years. [144061]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: The following table shows the percentage of each LEA's Local Schools Budget delegated to schools in the years 1999–2000 to 2002–03. Data for the percentage of total education expenditure delegated to schools by LEAs will require further work and I will write to the hon. Member.

Percentage of local schools Budget delegated

		1999–2000	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*
202	Camden	80.2	81.1	85.6	87.1
203	Greenwich	78.5	84.1	85.7	87.7
204	Hackney	76.4	83.4	85.2	86.6
205	Hammersmith and Fulham	79.5	85.9	87.3	87.2
206	Islington	81.2	82.2	86.1	87.2
207	Kensington and Chelsea	75.5	81.9	83.6	83.9
208	Lambeth	85.0	81.4	83.7	85.2
209	Lewisham	83.8	86.3	88.3	87.3
210	Southwark	77.4	85.2	86.7	87.2
211	Tower Hamlets	79.0	86.5	88.0	88.6
212	Wandsworth	80.9	83.4	86.1	88.0
213	Westminster	75.1	81.0	85.7	87.4
301	Barking and Dagenham	80.5	82.5	86.2	87.1
302	Barnet	86.1	86.7	90.2	90.2
303	Bexley	80.8	83.9	86.7	85.2
304	Brent	87.8	88.0	88.5	87.7
305	Bromley	82.5	83.3	85.8	86.1
306	Croydon	83.4	84.9	85.6	86.0
307	Ealing	80.5	81.9	86.4	87.3
308	Enfield	81.2	83.5	86.7	87.0
309	Haringey	74.9	81.2	85.1	87.3
310	Harrow	80.2	83.1	86.1	88.0
311	Havering	86.8	87.1	90.6	89.8
312	Hillingdon	87.1	86.9	88.3	87.9
313	Hounslow	84.3	84.4	86.9	87.4
314	Kingston upon Thames	83.8	84.3	88.5	87.1
315	Merton	79.6	82.8	85.5	87.4
316	Newham	76.4	83.2	86.5	86.8
317	Redbridge	84.4	85.9	88.2	87.2
318	Richmond upon Thames	82.1	81.4	86.5	87.4
319	Sutton	83.0	84.8	87.0	87.5
320	Waltham Forest	83.8	84.2	86.0	87.1
330	Birmingham	85.2	87.4	87.7	87.6
331	Coventry	84.1	83.8	85.9	87.1
332	Dudley	83.9	86.0	85.7	88.4
333	Sandwell	78.6	83.2	87.9	88.3
334	Solihull	85.5	86.0	86.9	85.4

Percentage of local schools Budget delegated

		1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
335	Walsall	86.1	85.9	86.8	87.2
336	Wolverhampton	82.5	83.8	86.8	87.8
340	Knowsley	80.0	82.8	86.2	87.3
341	Liverpool	81.2	86.2	86.9	87.4
342	St. Helens	81.2	84.0	87.7	88.0
343	Sefton	80.2	86.4	89.5	89.0
344	Wirral	81.6	82.8	87.1	86.7
350	Bolton	80.8	84.2	85.3	86.9
351	Bury	81.3	84.6	86.6	87.1
352	Manchester	77.4	81.8	85.4	87.9
353	Oldham	82.6	86.2	86.7	87.0
354	Rochdale	80.6	83.6	87.4	87.6
355	Salford	77.4	86.0	87.6	87.0
356	Stockport	81.6	82.7	85.1	87.0
357	Tameside	82.1	84.6	85.2	87.6
358	Trafford	82.3	83.1	88.6	88.8
359	Wigan	85.1	87.3	88.8	88.3
370	Barnsley	77.1	82.3	86.6	87.3
371	Doncaster	81.4	83.0	84.7	88.1
372	Rotherham	82.4	87.0	88.9	87.9
373	Sheffield	82.2	83.9	85.7	87.5
380	Bradford	81.4	83.7	86.5	89.0
381	Calderdale	83.1	84.1	85.8	87.9
382	Kirklees	83.2	86.7	88.5	88.3
383	Leeds	85.2	86.2	85.8	87.4
384	Wakefield	77.8	82.3	85.0	87.0
390	Gateshead	78.2	83.4	86.1	84.3
391	Newcastle upon Tyne	75.9	86.2	85.4	87.3
392	North Tyneside	80.4	81.9	86.8	87.4
393	South Tyneside	80.5	83.3	87.0	86.5
394	Sunderland	84.6	85.6	86.7	88.4
800	Bath & North East Somerset	82.6	84.2	85.2	87.8
801	City of Bristol	82.7	85.2	86.1	87.7
802	North Somerset	81.3	82.3	85.4	85.9
803	South Gloucestershire	82.3	82.8	86.3	87.0
805	Hartlepool	81.4	84.3	86.9	87.0
806	Middlesbrough	76.7	84.5	86.3	85.6
807	Redcar and Cleveland	82.2	86.6	87.3	87.6
808	Stockton-on-Tees	81.3	85.7	86.3	87.1
810	City of Kingston Upon Hull	81.0	83.1	85.8	87.1
811	East Riding of Yorkshire	83.2	82.5	86.7	87.1
812	North East Lincolnshire	81.7	85.3	85.0	87.3
813	North Lincolnshire	79.3	81.7	86.8	87.1
815	North Yorkshire	83.7	83.8	86.8	87.3
816	York	83.2	84.3	85.3	87.0
820	Bedfordshire	83.9	85.0	85.1	87.3
821	Luton	81.4	84.5	85.8	87.2
825	Buckinghamshire	79.5	80.5	85.1	85.4
826	Milton Keynes	83.0	83.6	85.3	87.0
830	Derbyshire	84.3	85.5	85.6	86.2
831	Derby	80.2	83.0	85.2	87.6
835	Dorset	79.9	80.2	86.6	86.9
836	Poole	84.5	85.9	87.5	89.5
837	Bournemouth	83.3	85.0	88.0	87.0
840	Durham	80.7	82.3	87.4	86.9
841	Darlington	82.1	82.6	86.6	85.9
845	East Sussex	80.3	81.9	86.9	87.1
846	Brighton and Hove	79.7	81.0	87.3	87.7
850	Hampshire	85.2	85.5	86.4	87.4
851	Portsmouth	86.0	86.3	86.4	87.1
852	Southampton	83.6	86.1	86.9	87.6
855	Leicestershire	83.3	84.2	85.0	84.7
856	Leicester	79.3	80.6	85.1	86.4
857	Rutland	84.4	84.4	86.7	87.1
860	Staffordshire	86.1	84.9	85.3	88.0
861	Stoke-on-Trent	82.1	85.9	88.3	87.0
865	Wiltshire	83.5	83.8	86.1	86.0
866	Swindon	83.2	85.4	86.7	86.3
867	Bracknell Forest	80.0	82.3	85.1	86.0
868	Windsor and Maidenhead	81.9	83.7	85.3	87.0
869	West Berkshire	84.3	86.5	88.7	87.7
870	Reading	80.9	84.3	85.0	86.6
871	Slough	85.5	86.7	87.9	87.7

Percentage of local schools Budget delegated

		1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
872	Wokingham	82.7	84.1	86.1	85.4
873	Cambridgeshire	75.8	81.7	86.5	87.1
874	Peterborough	78.1	86.0	88.1	87.5
875	Cheshire	84.4	84.4	86.1	87.2
876	Halton	81.2	86.7	88.4	87.1
877	Warrington	84.8	86.4	87.0	87.8
878	Devon	81.2	80.5	87.6	87.1
879	Plymouth	82.6	83.8	87.4	87.6
880	Torbay	79.4	81.5	85.0	86.6
881	Essex	83.5	84.4	86.2	87.1
882	Southend-on-Sea	88.4	89.8	90.3	89.6
883	Thurrock	81.9	83.8	84.8	87.3
884	Herefordshire	78.7	81.2	85.1	86.1
885	Worcestershire	81.2	83.2	83.7	86.6
886	Kent	81.3	83.2	85.3	87.3
887	Medway	82.0	84.7	86.2	88.4
888	Lancashire	80.5	81.4	85.4	87.2
889	Blackburn with Darwen	78.0	82.6	85.7	87.1
890	Blackpool	79.1	81.5	85.6	85.6
891	Nottinghamshire	86.0	86.0	85.4	88.2
892	Nottingham	83.9	83.8	85.0	87.0
893	Shropshire	81.4	83.5	87.6	87.0
894	Telford & Wrekin	81.5	84.1	85.1	87.1
908	Cornwall	79.6	79.8	85.8	86.3
909	Cumbria	83.9	85.6	87.8	87.1
916	Gloucestershire	83.4	84.2	85.2	85.4
919	Hertfordshire	83.6	84.7	86.0	87.7
921	Isle of Wight	76.8	83.1	86.2	87.1
925	Lincolnshire	83.7	87.9	90.3	89.3
926	Norfolk	84.5	85.0	87.1	87.0
928	Northamptonshire	86.5	87.2	89.0	87.7
929	Northumberland	81.4	81.3	88.3	88.0
931	Oxfordshire	84.1	84.6	85.4	87.1
933	Somerset	84.6	84.8	85.8	85.4
935	Suffolk	85.6	85.4	86.8	89.1
936	Surrey	82.0	83.8	86.3	87.0
937	Warwickshire	82.1	85.3	86.9	87.3
938	West Sussex	83.5	83.4	87.3	87.9

Notes:

1. The figures shown in the table have previously been published as part of the Department's Comparative Tables and reflect the methods of calculation underlying the comparative tables for each year. This means that they incorporate various adjustments which were made in some or all of these years. For the years 1999–2000, 2000–01, 2001–02 and 2002–03, the published comparative tables included information on the level of financial delegation direct to schools by LEAs. The measurement of these levels of delegation were associated with the achievement of delegation targets by LEAs. For each of those years, the average level of delegation stood at 82.4 per cent., 84 per cent., 86.3 per cent. and 87.2 per cent. respectively. The corresponding percentage for 1997–98 was about 79 per cent.
2. The Department does not hold any comparable data for 2003–04. With the Education Act 2002 came the introduction of separate LEA and schools budgets, the establishment of schools forums and the introduction of a reserve power which enables the Secretary of State, in exceptional cases, to set a minimum level for an LEA's local schools budget. As a result, Ministers decided not to set delegation targets of the kind which had operated since 1999.
3. Only about one-tenth of the funding retained centrally by LEAs relates to "central administration". Most of it relates to such items as school transport (about one-fifth of the total retained centrally); special educational needs (SEN); out-of-school education and behaviour support; and school improvement.

Divorce

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children were affected by divorce in *(a)* 2001–02 and *(b)* 2002–03. [145658]

Mr. Lammy: I have been asked to reply.

The Office for National Statistics publishes annual figures for the number of children of divorcing couples in England and Wales. The total number of children involved for the last two years for which figures are available are as follows:

2001—146,914

2002—149,335

Early-years Funding

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in each local education authority area received early years funding in the current financial year; and what the total funding made available in the current financial year under the programme is in each local education authority area. [145431]

Mr. Miliband: The Department does not fund schools directly. Local education authorities receive funding through revenue support grant through the calculation of Education Formula Spending Shares for early years provision. The under-five sub-block in the Education Formula Spending Share calculation for 2003–04 was £2.6 billion. However, this funding is unhypothecated and it is for LEAs to decide how much to spend on early

years and then allocate resources to schools and other early years settings as appropriate. The Department does not collect allocated budgets for every early year provider.

The Department also provides direct grants specifically for early years programmes. MNS development grant is aimed specifically at the maintained sector. The number of schools benefiting and the amount allocated for each LEA is shown below.

£

LEA	Number of schools	Amount of funding allocated
Barnet	4	55,172
Barnsley	2	23,215
Bedfordshire	7	74,150
Birmingham	25	204,633
Blackburn with Darwen	9	77,239
Bolton	5	50,208
Bradford	6	54,096
Brent	4	26,457
Brighton and Hove	2	23,459
Bristol, City of	15	161,412
Buckinghamshire	4	37,833
Bury	1	14,150
Cambridgeshire	6	55,899
Camden	1	15,786
Cheshire	2	26,242
Cornwall	2	19,367
Coventry	1	19,772
Croydon	6	56,458
Cumbria	7	64,458
Darlington	6	73,866
Derby	9	65,837
Derbyshire	8	73,890
Devon	1	14,911
Dudley	1	15,170
Durham	15	129,919
Ealing	5	42,732
East Riding of Yorkshire	4	50,981
Essex	2	34,373
Gateshead	1	13,229
Greenwich	6	58,947
Hackney	2	20,474
Halton	4	42,764
Hammersmith and Fulham	5	52,773
Hampshire	3	27,557
Haringey	3	30,324
Hartlepool	1	13,440
Hertfordshire	17	166,387
Hillingdon	1	18,363
Islington	3	31,376
Kensington and Chelsea	4	28,421
Kent	1	14,997
Kingston upon Hull, City of	3	35,139
Kingston upon Thames	1	17,761
Kirklees	3	39,823
Lambeth	5	48,049
Lancashire	30	260,771
Leicester	1	11,559
Leicestershire	1	12,575
Lewisham	2	28,080
Lincolnshire	5	53,656
Liverpool	6	49,282
Luton	6	76,067
Manchester	2	16,972
Milton Keynes	2	20,187
Newcastle upon Tyne	7	58,321
Newham	8	93,567
Norfolk	4	42,662
North East Lincolnshire	3	37,009
North Tyneside	2	22,725
North Yorkshire	3	30,481
Northamptonshire	8	69,887
Northumberland	1	14,911
Nottingham	4	33,162
Nottinghamshire	2	27,211
Oxfordshire	15	102,601
Peterborough	1	22,090
Plymouth	2	22,189
Portsmouth	1	15,862
Reading	5	56,025
Richmond upon Thames	1	12,921
Rochdale	8	84,765
Rotherham	3	40,766
Salford	13	73,072
Sefton	4	35,400
Sheffield	5	64,889
Slough	5	69,925
South Tyneside	6	41,811
Southampton	1	17,765
Southwark	5	54,963
St. Helens	2	23,474
Staffordshire	9	85,024
Stockport	9	69,917
Stoke-on-Trent	11	69,032
Suffolk	1	17,246
Sunderland	10	77,213
Surrey	5	44,608
Sutton	2	24,549
Tameside	3	27,972
Telford and Wrekin	2	21,312
Tower Hamlets	7	70,166
Wakefield	5	44,749
Walsall	8	74,114
Waltham Forest	4	36,406
Wandsworth	3	26,740
Warrington	1	18,025
Warwickshire	9	70,492
West Berkshire	2	24,557
West Sussex	4	44,263
Westminster	3	25,036
Wigan	2	27,194
Windsor and Maidenhead	4	39,072
Wirral	3	33,044
Wokingham	1	21,658
Wolverhampton	8	60,931
Worcestershire	1	12,575
York	1	17,592
	515	5,002,587

Family Mediation

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many family disputes involving contact with children have received government funding for mediation in each of the last six years. [141144]

Margaret Hodge: The Government encourages the use of family mediation as an alternative to court proceedings in appropriate cases. Mediation can be particularly beneficial in resolving disputes over child contact. Public funding for family mediation was introduced under the provisions of Part III of the Family Law Act 1996. The Legal Services Commission began contracting with mediation services for the provision of publicly funded family mediation in March 1997. Contracts were completed in all areas in March 2000 and publicly funded family mediation is now available throughout England and Wales.

The Legal Services Commission has reported that the numbers of cases for which public funding has been provided for family mediation since the introduction of the provisions of the Family Law Act where children issues were in dispute are as follows:

	Number
1997–1998	318
1998–1999	1056
1999–2000	4959
2000–2001	7288
2001–2002	9658
2002–2003	10,383

Food in Schools Programme

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the total cost to public funds of the Food in Schools Programme has been. [144562]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: Food in Schools is a joint Department for Education and Skills (DfES)/ Department of Health (DH) programme. Funding for the DfES strand of Food in Schools (April 2001—March 2004) is £545,000, while the DH strand has been allocated £2 million (April 2001—February 2005). Food in Schools aims to bring together all food related activities in schools, including training for teachers, and to help them work towards the National Healthy Schools Standard.

Food Technologists

Alistair Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations have been made to him on shortages of food technologists in schools; and if he will make a statement. [144819]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: I am aware of no such representations. We maintain regular contact with the Design and Technology Association (DATA), the professional association for food technology teachers. We work with them and other partners to offer training, support and guidance to teachers of food technology in both primary and secondary schools.

Foster Care

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent discussions he has had with *(a)* the Chancellor of the Exchequer and *(b)* others regarding allowances for children in foster care; and if he will make a statement. [140912]

Margaret Hodge: Through the Choice Protects Programme and the consultation on the 'Supporting foster carers' section of the Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' we are consulting widely with a range of stakeholders about support for foster carers. Choice Protects is also investing £113 million over three years to expand and strengthen fostering services.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services state that fostering services must provide foster carers with an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with them.

The financial implications of the Green Paper will be considered as part of the Government's 2004 Spending Review.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many and what percentage of staff in his Department contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143896]

Mr. Charles Clarke: My Department actively supports and encourages payroll giving. Along with volunteering and charitable donations, staff can choose up to eight charities to make regular donations through the payroll system. There are currently 266 (5.7 per cent.) of my staff participating in the Payroll Giving Scheme raising a total of £27,023 per annum.

We are working with the Giving Campaign to increase the number of contributing employees to around 10 per cent. Employees often choose to give direct or volunteer their time to charities of their choice so Payroll Giving does not fully reflect the amount of charitable activity within my Department.

Hampshire Local Education Authority

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what *(a)* the Education Formula Spending Share for 2003–04, *(b)* the adjusted EFSS for 2003–04 used as part of the 2004–05 local government settlement, *(c)* the raw educational spending share for 2004–05 before the floors and ceilings and *(d)* the educational formula spending share for 2004–05 after floors and ceilings are for Hampshire Local Education Authority. [145972]

Mr. Miliband: The figures are provided in the table.

	£ million
2003–04 EFSS	580.127
2003–04 adjusted EFSS	582.313
2004–05 EFSS before floors and ceiling	587.937
2004–05 EFSS after floors and ceilings	606.795

Key Stage 3 Tests

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many pupils have taken Key Stage 3 tests early as a result of the Express Sets initiative referred to in the Green Paper, "Schools: Building on Success"; and if he will make a statement; [144488]

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress achieved in securing increases in the extent of setting within subjects as set out in paragraph 4.33 of the Green Paper "Schools: Building on Success". [144492]

Mr. Miliband: For 2003 and previous years there has been no readily available means of identifying pupils who took individual subjects or all three Key Stage 3 tests early. However, from 2004 onwards it will be

possible to identify these pupils and allow evaluation of any projects encouraging the implementation of a shorter Key Stage 3.

Data from lessons observed by Ofsted shows that there has been overall increase in setting at Key Stage 3 from 32 per cent. in 1998/99 to 36 per cent. in 2001/02. Setting has also increased within subjects at Key Stage 3 over the same period, although the extent of the increases varies from subject to subject.

It is not possible for the Department to determine readily whether schools' decisions to enter their pupils for the Key Stage 3 tests early, or increases in the use of setting, have been influenced by national or local initiatives or which of those may have been contributing factors. It is for schools to make decisions about early test entry and whether and how to use pupil grouping to best meet the learning needs of their pupils, although through the Primary and Key Stage 3 Strategies and in our Gifted and Talented programme we will continue to offer guidance and support on classroom practice. We are also exploring through a small project different models for a shorter Key Stage 3, designed to promote pupil motivation, engagement and progression, and to open up curricular flexibilities pre and post-14 through completion of the Key Stage 3 programme of study in two years.

"Making Contact Work"

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when he will publish the Government's response to the report, "Making Contact Work"; and if he will make a statement. [144491]

Margaret Hodge: The Children Act Sub-Committee published their report, "Making Contact Work", in February 2002. The then Lord Chancellor's Department published its interim response in August 2002. Following the Machinery of Government changes last year, I now have lead responsibility for child contact issues. We continue to view children's interests as being paramount and we want to encourage contact between children and non-resident parents where it is in the best interest of the child and safe for all family members.

Working with my hon. Friends in the Department for Constitutional Affairs, we are considering carefully how the family justice system and related children's services can better meet the needs of all children and their parents following relationship breakdown. We want to ensure that better outcomes are achieved for children by, where possible, helping parents agree contact arrangements without the intervention of the courts. We expect to conclude these considerations early in the New Year and that the Government's response to "Making Contact Work" will then be published.

Music Teaching

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what the average school budget is for musical instruments in each local education authority in England; [145463]

(2) how many children in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools do not have access to music lessons in school outside the National Curriculum; [145473]

(3) what progress the Government have made in extending music opportunities in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools since 1997; [145474]

(4) how many children in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools do not have access to a musical instrument. [145476]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The Government do not determine how much each school or LEA spends on musical instruments, nor do we collect information on how many children have access to a musical instrument.

Since 1999, every local education authority has received Music Standards Fund (MSF) which can be spent in any way that enhances opportunities for pupils to access musical education of high quality. In the vast majority of authorities, this will include specialist instrumental tuition outside of the National Curriculum. According to a recent Survey of LEA Music Services[1] commissioned by DfES, at any moment in time, on average 8 per cent. of pupils will be receiving regular instrumental lessons through their LEA, although many more will be learning music in the classroom or in their own time.

The introduction of MSF in 1999 to protect and expand LEA Music Services has caused a major upturn in music provision. Between 1999 and 2004, some £270 million will have gone to LEA Music Services.

In addition, we have pledged that, over time, all primary school pupils who want to should have an opportunity to learn a musical instrument. Ofsted are currently evaluating 12 pilots which aim to model how specialist instrumental tuition can be integrated with classroom music teaching. The results of the evaluation will be published later this year.

[1] Research Report No. 478, 30 October 2003. Survey of Local Education Authorities' Music Services. 2002. Sue Hallam and Lynne Rogers, Institute of Education, University of London.

Numeracy and Literacy Targets

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which of the Government's *(a)* numeracy and *(b)* literacy targets for 11 year olds were missed in 2002. [145202]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: The 2002 Key Stage 2 targets for 80 per cent. of 11 year olds to reach level 4+ in English and 75 per cent. of 11 year olds to reach level 4+ in mathematics were set in 1997. The results from the 2002 National Curriculum tests showed that 75 per cent. of 11 year olds reached this level in English and 73 per cent. in mathematics. Results were maintained at that level in 2003.

These results represent a significant improvement—of 12 percentage points in English and 11 percentage points in mathematics—in standards since 1997,

reflecting the impact of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies on primary schools. We remain absolutely committed, through our new Primary Strategy, to supporting schools to achieve the ambitious targets we have set for standards of literacy and numeracy.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 11-year-olds have reached the required standard in *(a)* English and *(b)* numeracy in each year since the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, broken down by local education authority. [145203]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: The information requested has been placed in the Libraries.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much funding has been provided to implement the Government's *(a)* numeracy and *(b)* literacy strategies in each year since 1998. [145206]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which started in 1998 and 1999 respectively, have transformed standards of attainment in primary schools. The total funding available (including matched funding) to local education authorities in England through the Standards Fund to support the implementation of the strategies in each financial year since 1998–99 was as follows:

£ million

	National Literacy Strategy	*National Numeracy Strategy*
1998–99	62.7	—
1999–2000	72.8	73.8
2000–01	84.5	95.2
2001–02	102.6	103
2002–03	101.2	101.2
2003–04	107.4	107.4

Pathfinder Project (School Work Force)

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools participated in the Pathfinder Transforming the School Workforce project in 2003–04; what the total value of that support was; and what financial support will be given to these schools in 2004–05. [144846]

Mr. Miliband: 32 schools participated in the Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder project that ran during the academic year 2002/03. In total, some £1 million was allocated to the schools in the financial year 2003–04. The Pathfinder project has now come to an end—a full evaluation will be published in the new year. No additional funding will be allocated to the Pathfinder schools in 2004–05.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 287–88W, on Pathfinder projects, if he will publish the table to which the answer refers. [145470]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is shown in the following tables, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries.

Department for Education and Skills pathfinder projects 2003–04

Local education authority	*Number of schools*	*Total funding*
Barking and Dagenham	15	150,280
Barnet	7	38,000
Barnsley	4	29,709
Bath and North East Somerset	4	62,840
Bedfordshire	n/a	162,460
Bexley	1	8,500
Birmingham	134	494,152
Blackburn with Darwen	5	25,000
Bradford	12	90,000
Brent	4	38,300
Brighton and Hove	50	140,380
Bristol, City of	2	25,000
Bromley	8	43,880
Buckinghamshire	4	21,340
Bury	30	65,460
Calderdale	34	32,900
Cambridgeshire	6	31,440
Camden	1	5,300
Cheshire	2	40,790
Cornwall	13	51,700
Coventry	59	725,720
Croydon	8	50,000
Cumbria	14	659,860
Darlington	2	57,980
Derby, City of	2	466,755
Derbyshire	3	718,162
Doncaster	2	86,900
Dorset	1	8,500
Dudley	3	258,703
Durham	1	225,806
Ealing	1	75,000
East Riding of Yorkshire	115	137,705
East Sussex	2	31,400
Enfield	59	182,476
Essex	21	338,972
Gateshead	n/a	420,980
Gloucestershire	5	73,814
Greenwich	2	33,548
Hackney	9	185,000
Halton	10	100,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	9	250,848
Hampshire	76	227,657
Haringey	5	30,000
Harrow	1	315,919
Herefordshire	1	17,285
Hertfordshire	79	672,937
Hounslow	15	67,720
Isle of Wight	1	2,300
Islington	n/a	250,938
Kent	520	367,476
Kingston upon Hull, City of	5	118,430
Kirklees	8	55,000
Knowlsey	45	1,133,605
Lambeth	2	64,186
Lancashire	75	194,950
Leeds	3	18,375
Leicestershire	3	58,500
Lewisham	2	503,950
Lincolnshire	9	457,085
Liverpool	76	263,542
Manchester	3	351,296
Medway	1	1,750
Merton	3	22,000
Middlesbrough	1	5,000
Newham	15	388,300
Norfolk	92	444,950
North Lincolnshire	n/a	484,085
North Somerset	6	8,500
North Tyneside	137	346,082
North Yorkshire	1	17,000
Northamptonshire	2	63,845
Northumberland	4	8,500

Department for Education and Skills pathfinder projects 2003–04

Local education authority	*Number of schools*	*Total funding*
Nottingham City of	9	444,500
Nottinghamshire	71	705,161
Oldham	44	878,045
Oxfordshire	3	87,303
Peterborough, City of	1	143,000
Plymouth, City of	7	435,327
Portsmouth	10	90,750
Redbridge	4	63,400
Richmond upon Thames	32	70,349
Rotherham	2	11,065
Salford	1	5,834
Sandwell	n/a	182,048
Sefton	1	31,340
Sheffield	43	286,180
Shropshire	4	806,483
Slough	2	38,770
Solihull	2	66,800
Somerset	7	405,406
South Gloucestershire	n/a	691,639
South Tyneside	16	168,000
Southampton	n/a	395,200
Southend	2	20,792
Southwark	3	291,352
St. Helens	1	41,000
Staffordshire	3	46,587
Stockport	n/a	330,419
Stockton-on-Tees	3	530,574
Stoke-on-Trent	1	12,000
Suffolk	6	174,475
Surrey	2	56,586
Tower Hamlets	3	382,754
Trafford	1	15,000
Wakefield	4	412,500
Walsall	1	202,048
Wandsworth	1	16,010
Warrington	3	185,299
Warwickshire	6	915,194
West Sussex	4	64,542
Westminster, City of	3	587,528
Wigan	1	25,000
Wiltshire	10	82,232
Wokingham	12	26,000
Wolverhampton	n/a	881,564
Worcestershire	25	42,500
York	5	299,500
England	2,214	25,254,779

n/a = Funding will be shown for this project but 'n/a' for the number of schools.

Notes:

1. Schools may be involved in more than one project, as a result some schools may be counted more than once.
2. The number of institutions involved in the 14–19 Pathfinders are not held centrally.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on the Pathfinder project, Transforming the School Workforce, and its benefits for people in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland. [144745]

Mr. Miliband: The implementation of the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload will benefit teachers, support staff and, most importantly, pupils. The experience of the Pathfinder schools has demonstrated what can be achieved through workforce reform and how those changes can best be managed at school level. The lessons learned from the project will help schools across the country to make the best use of their resources and to free teachers to focus on teaching and learning. A full evaluation of the project will be published in the new year.

Pre-school Places

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time child care places in nursery and childminding settings Ofsted has (i) registered and (ii) inspected for children under the age of three over the last 12 months. [143576]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for the Office of Education and Standards (Ofsted) and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries. Ofsted has been responsible for the registration and inspection of children's day care facilities since September 2001.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children aged *(a)* between four and 11, *(b)* between 12 and 16 and *(c)* between 16 and 18 have been excluded from school in (i) St. Helens and (ii) Merseyside in (A) 2001, (B) 2002 and (C) 2003. [144588]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The information requested is given for the following ages: four to 11, 12 to 15 and 16 to 18.

Maintained primary, secondary and all special schools: Number of excluded pupils by age group—1999/2000 to 2001/02 (Estimates)[1]

	1999/2000	*2000/01*[1]	*2001/02*[1]
St. Helens LEA			
Pupils aged[3]:			
4 to 11	2	0	1
12 to 15	25	10	16
16 to 18	0	0	0
Total[4]	28	10	17
Merseyside[2]			
Pupils aged[3]:			
4 to 11	59	65	57
12 to 15	251	154	161
16 to 18	2	3	0
Total[4]	312	222	218

[1] Estimates have been made for 2000/01 and 2001/02 due to incomplete school level returns.

[2] Includes Knowsley, Liverpool, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral LEAs.

[3] Age as at 31 August at start of reference year.

[4] Total number of excluded pupils.

Source:

Annual Schools' Census

Latest information on exclusions refers to the school year 2001/02.

School Finance

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much each component of the school formula spending share per pupil for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school pupils was in each local education authority in (i) 2003–04 and (ii) 2004–05. [145968]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested has been placed in the Libraries.

School Premises (Arson Attacks)

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what measures the Government will put in place to tackle arson attacks on school premises in the next three years. [146111]

Mr. Miliband: The Department takes the problem of arson in schools very seriously and in 2000 issued the guide Fire Safety, which includes advice on how to reduce the risks of arson attacks. This complements our guidance on reducing crime in schools, such as the booklet "Improving Security in Schools" and the video "Can You See What They See?" We also have a school security website that is regularly updated—www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolsecurity. We now have consultants working on a new, and more comprehensive fire safety guidance document for schools. It covers risk assessments and will include advice on security and the prevention of arson. We anticipate that the document will be subject to public consultation early in 2004.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has general responsibility for fire safety and arson and we have been looking at how the two departments can work more closely on the issue of fire safety in schools. ODPM officials now attend the Department's Working Group on School Security, while we have recently accepted an invitation to send a representative to meetings of the Arson Control Forum, which remains the national strategic body for addressing the wider arson problem. This should help us to consider how best to promote school arson prevention initiatives among schools and local education authorities.

Officials from my Department also sit on the Arson in Schools Working Group, a group of experts representing the insurance industry, the fire and police services, local authorities and government departments. One of its outputs has been the publication of the guide "How to Combat Arson in Schools", which is available free and has been well received by schools.

Of course if a fire should happen in a school, the Department's primary concern is for the safety of pupils, teachers and other users. Regulation 17 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 requires that every part of a school building, and of the land provided for a school, shall be such that the safe escape of the occupants in case of fire is reasonably assured. Schools are also covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and by subsequent related regulations. These include aspects of fire safety.

School Transport

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when the draft bill on school transport will be published; what its principal provisions will be; what assessment has been made of the impact it will have on policies relating to transport to denominational schools of pupils of that denomination; what assessment has been made of the financial implications of the bill for *(a)* parents, *(b)* schools and *(c)* local education authorities; what assessment has been made of the effect it will have on the current providers of school transport; whether any of the proposed changes will take place on a pilot basis; and what consultations have been undertaken by the Department. [142786]

Mr. Charles Clarke *[holding answer 8 December 2003]:* In September 2003 the Secretary of State for Transport and I published 'Travelling to School: an action plan'. It consulted on measures to cut congestion and pollution and promote healthier travel alternatives for pupils travelling to and from school, including plans for piloting new arrangements for school transport in a small number of exemplar authorities.

The draft school transport bill will invite local education authorities to run up to 12 pilot schemes providing flexible, safe, transport choices for pupils and parents. Pilot areas will be required to look at the needs of all pupils, not just those entitled to free transport, and pilots should reduce car use on the school run. We would particularly welcome bids that seek to support pupils travelling to denominational schools.

We will publish a draft regulatory impact assessment alongside the draft bill: it will consider the financial implications for parents, schools, local education authorities and current providers of home to school transport. Whilst precise financial assessments can not be made until we know what proposals are put forward the financial implications will be considered as part of the selection and subsequent evaluation of pilot areas.

We consulted on outline proposals in "Travelling to School: an action plan" and will consult on the draft bill and proposals for implementation in early 2004.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make it his policy to ensure that free school transport is available to the children of families who wish to exercise a choice not to attend a faith school and who have to travel outside their catchment area. [145519]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: We have no plans to change the school transport legislation to require local education authorities (LEAs) to provide free school transport for pupils whose families wish to exercise a choice not to attend a faith school and who have to travel outside their catchment area. LEAs may choose to provide free or subsidised transport for pupils attending faith schools, or for pupils whose parents wish them not to attend a faith school, using their discretion to operate policies that meet the needs of their local communities.

Sex Education

Mr. Keith Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what arrangements his Department has made to ensure co-ordination of the teenage sexual health strategy with the Department of Health's sexual health strategy; [145188]

(2) if he will take steps to ensure sex education teaching in schools takes full account of the Department of Health's teenage sexual health strategy. [145190]

Mr. Stephen Twigg *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and the Sexual Health Strategy are closely co-ordinated to raise young people's awareness of sexual health issues, improve sexual health and promote choice. A shared feature of both strategies

is the national campaign which targets young people, and improved availability of sexual health services and access to them.

Teaching about sexual health and safer sex are key elements of the Government's sexual health strategy and are covered by our Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) Guidance which was sent to all schools in July 2000. Through SRE pupils learn about sexual health, contraception and the range of advice and support services which are available. Young people should be made aware of the risks of contracting a STI and know about prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Standards Fund

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in each local education authority area received Standards Fund allocations in the current financial year; and what the total funding made available in the current financial year under the programme is in each local education authority area. [145434]

Mr. Miliband: The following table shows the number of schools in each local education authority in England in receipt of Standards Fund allocations, and the total funding made available under the programme in each authority. Allocation figures include Government grant and local education authority contributions.

Standards Fund allocations by local education authority 2003–04

Local education authority	*Number of schools receiving devolved Standards Fund allocations*[2]	*Recurrent grants (£ million)*	*Capital grants (£ million)*
Barking	59	11.0	6.3
Barnet	116	13.1	8.8
Barnsley	100	12.7	8.9
Bath and North East Somerset	86	5.4	6.3
Bedfordshire	215	13.1	14.7
Bexley	85	8.3	7.6
Birmingham	425	74.1	36.8
Blackburn with Darwen	73	12.8	5.9
Blackpool	43	8.7	5.1
Bolton	126	11.7	9.7
Bournemouth	41	4.4	4.4
Bracknell Forest	39	3.3	3.4
Bradford	199	37.0	16.0
Brent	79	16.5	7.5
Brighton and Hove	73	7.8	6.0
Bristol	148	18.1	13.5
Bromley	102	9.4	9.2
Buckinghamshire	233	17.5	18.0
Bury	88	5.4	6.4
Calderdale	105	9.1	7.6
Cambridgeshire	245	15.3	18.4
Camden	56	13.5	4.3
Cheshire	349	19.9	21.2
Cornwall	279	16.4	17.1
Corporation of London	1	0.3	0.1
Coventry	118	15.3	9.5
Croydon	121	14.7	8.9
Cumbria	336	20.0	18.1
Darlington	42	4.3	4.3
Derby City	99	11.0	8.5
Derbyshire	416	22.9	29.4
Devon	372	19.8	23.1
Doncaster	134	18.5	13.4
Dorset	184	11.0	11.9
Dudley	111	10.8	11.4
Durham	292	19.9	20.9
Ealing	84	17.9	8.7
East Riding of Yorkshire	160	9.5	13.4
East Sussex	194	14.3	14.9
Enfield	89	16.7	11.4

Standards Fund allocations by local education authority 2003–04

Local education authority	*Number of schools receiving devolved Standards Fund allocations*[2]	*Recurrent grants (£ million)*	*Capital grants (£ million)*
Essex	583	38.2	44.9
Gateshead	91	13.1	6.0
Gloucestershire	308	19.1	18.4
Greenwich	84	17.8	7.5
Hackney	69	17.7	8.8
Halton	64	9.8	4.5
Hammersmith & Fulham	49	10.9	4.0
Hampshire	537	30.2	44.6
Haringey	81	18.3	5.0
Harrow	70	7.1	5.8
Hartlepool	38	7.5	3.8
Havering	86	7.9	8.3
Herefordshire	102	6.7	5.5
Hertfordshire	529	32.3	35.3
Hillingdon	89	11.8	8.5
Hounslow	79	14.9	8.2
Isle of Wight	69	4.5	4.7
Isles of Scilly	1	0.5	0.3
Islington	59	14.0	6.5
Kensington & Chelsea	32	7.6	2.0
Kent	607	44.6	44.7
Kingston Upon Thames	50	4.6	4.3
Kingston-upon-Hull	97	15.6	9.4
Kirklees	192	20.2	15.1
Knowsley	77	14.0	5.6
Lambeth	75	15.8	4.6
Lancashire	613	43.9	37.3
Leeds	294	40.9	25.1
Leicester City	113	20.0	11.1
Leicestershire	287	16.7	21.1
Lewisham	89	17.0	7.8
Lincolnshire	371	26.2	23.0
Liverpool	195	33.6	13.7
Luton	77	14.1	7.3
Manchester	182	32.1	14.9
Medway	113	9.0	9.2
Merton	54	6.4	4.5
Middlesbrough	60	10.7	6.3
Milton Keynes	105	10.2	7.7
Newcastle upon Tyne	95	15.9	12.2
Newham	84	23.4	10.3
Norfolk	451	25.7	27.5
North East Lincolnshire	0	8.1	8.3
North Lincolnshire	86	7.1	5.8
North Somerset	79	7.0	7.2
North Tyneside	78	12.4	9.1
North Yorkshire	387	19.3	21.3
Northamptonshire	346	21.8	23.0
Northumberland	211	11.7	12.6
Nottingham City	123	18.4	12.1
Nottinghamshire	367	22.9	27.3
Oldham	118	16.4	9.1
Oxfordshire	296	17.5	20.5
Peterborough	77	9.0	9.4
Plymouth	103	8.7	8.9
Poole	42	4.2	4.3
Portsmouth	69	7.7	5.8
Reading	48	5.9	4.3
Redbridge	73	10.3	7.8
Redcar and Cleveland	65	9.8	5.6
Richmond upon Thames	51	4.5	3.9
Rochdale	96	14.5	8.2
Rotherham	134	19.0	11.4
Rutland	21	1.6	1.4
Salford	103	14.3	7.7
Sandwell	122	18.9	13.1
Sefton	117	17.1	9.1
Sheffield	185	29.1	19.3
Shropshire	167	9.8	10.9
Slough	42	7.6	4.0
Solihull	86	9.8	6.9
Somerset	272	15.7	25.0
South Gloucestershire	115	7.7	9.6
South Tyneside	70	11.2	5.6
Southampton	84	7.8	6.7
Southend-on-Sea	61	6.0	6.2
Southwark	94	17.6	7.2

Standards Fund allocations by local education authority 2003–04

Local education authority	*Number of schools receiving devolved Standards Fund allocations*[2]	*Recurrent grants (£ million)*	*Capital grants (£ million)*
St. Helens	73	11.8	5.4
Staffordshire	403	23.6	28.2
Stockport	121	9.6	10.4
Stockton-on-Tees	80	13.8	7.1
Stoke-on-Trent	102	15.6	9.5
Suffolk	343	19.5	22.6
Sunderland	116	18.0	10.5
Surrey	403	22.9	26.6
Sutton	60	5.8	5.4
Swindon	82	6.3	6.9
Tameside	101	10.0	7.5
Telford and Wrekin	83	6.1	7.5
Thurrock	63	7.5	4.9
Torbay	44	4.2	3.9
Tower Hamlets	93	26.6	7.8
Trafford	97	8.0	8.2
Wakefield	152	12.6	12.6
Walsall	121	15.3	11.8
Waltham Forest	91	17.2	8.0
Wandsworth	77	14.9	8.1
Warrington	86	6.6	6.1
Warwickshire	245	17.1	22.6
West Berkshire	80	5.4	5.9
West Sussex	302	19.1	22.8
Westminster	50	10.5	3.4
Wigan	142	11.7	9.1
Wiltshire	260	13.0	14.3
Windsor and Maidenhead	60	4.5	5.2
Wirral	134	19.8	12.0
Wokingham	63	4.4	6.4
Wolverhampton	107	16.8	11.2
Worcestershire	263	16.1	17.7
York	69	5.7	6.1
England Total	22,372	2,192.0	1,740.4

[1] Data on numbers of schools is taken from the 2003–04 Section 52 Budget Table 2

[2] The number of schools receiving Devolved Standards Fund (DSF) is at the time of the budgets being set. This could be expected to rise once all unallocated devolved Standards Fund has been distributed.

[3] The data is as reported by LEAs. As a result the blank entries are where LEAs have not entered any data.

Sure Start

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans he has to expand Sure Start schemes. [144709]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* There will be 524 Sure Start local programmes by the beginning of 2004. Children's centres represent the next stage of the Government's plans to expand high quality integrated services in disadvantaged areas. Centres will develop largely from existing provision, including Sure Start local programmes, early excellence centres and neighbourhood nurseries. Children's centres will be initially developed in the 20 per cent. most disadvantaged wards in England. In the long term the Government aim to develop a children's centre in every community.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children have had access to Sure Start local programmes in England and Wales in each year since 1998; and how many are expected to have access to such programmes in 2004. [145265]

Margaret Hodge: The numbers of children aged 0 to 3 with access to Sure Start local programmes in England as at 31 March each year are shown in the table. All numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred. Sure Start in Wales is the responsibility of the devolved administration.

	Number of children
1999	0
2000	41,700
2001	116,600
2002	200,500
2003	350,600
2004 (estimated)	411,900

Teachers (Assaults)

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many assaults there were against teachers by pupils in schools in the Eastern region; and what measures he is taking to prevent such attacks. [144862]

Alistair Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many assaults have been recorded on *(a)* teachers and *(b)* other local authority education staff in Bedfordshire in (i) the last year for which figures are available and (ii) each of the previous five years. [144899]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Serious injuries to primary and secondary teachers in Great Britain caused by physical violence reported to the Health and Safety Executive have been as follows:

	Number of serious injuries
1996/97	83
1997/98	119
1998/99	124
1999/2000	135
2000/01	135
2001/02	110

These figures are not available by region or local authority. Data on less serious assaults are not available.

We are investing nearly £470 million over the next three years in measures to improve behaviour and attendance in schools. These will include training for school staff in preventing violence. We have also made it clear that head teachers may permanently exclude pupils responsible for violence. New legislation in the Anti-social Behaviour Act will enable local education authorities to apply for court-imposed Parenting Orders for parents whose children have been excluded from school for serious misbehaviour. And we have issued "A legal toolkit for schools" which identifies legal remedies available when school staff experience problems with violent parents.

Voluntary Aided Schools

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent advice he has given to *(a)* diocesan boards of education and *(b)* local

education authorities, regarding the budget for capital works available to voluntary aided schools in 2004/05; and if he will make a statement. [144669]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* Officials will shortly be writing to all dioceses and local education authorities to confirm to them that final allocations of formulaic allocations for voluntary aided schools will take place in February 2004. Major allocations of capital grant from the Department's Targeted Capital Fund will be announced in January 2004 in the usual way.

Youth and Schools Councils

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what action is being taken to promote and support youth and schools councils in the North East; and how many *(a)* exist and *(b)* receive departmental support. [144767]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: We encourage Connexions Partnerships and local authority Youth Services in all regions to promote the involvement of young people in local decision-making. We are aware of 15 youth councils in the North East. All receive indirect government support through Connexions Partnerships and Youth Services. Some Connexions Partnerships in the region are funding joint events with youth councils and one has dedicated £5,000 for the development of youth councils in three Districts. Youth Services are using some of their Transforming Youth Work Development Fund allocation to support the setting up of youth councils.

The Citizenship programme of study encourages the active participation of young people in the democratic life of their school and the wider community. We do not keep records of the number of school councils by region and such information could not be obtained in the time available without placing an undue burden on schools. Many schools that have councils have found them to be effective ways of involving their pupils directly in decision-making. The Department has funded School Councils UK to produce primary and secondary school toolkits to enable teachers and students to set up effective structures for pupil participation.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

BBC

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many staff in her Department are working solely on the BBC Charter review process. [145461]

Tessa Jowell *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The Department will have a core team of five people working solely on Charter review. However there are many others in DCMS and other Government Departments contributing significant amounts of their time to what is a complex, crosscutting programme of work.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to ensure that the BBC meets its requirements with regard to the independent productions quotas. [145477]

Estelle Morris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently agreed amendments to the formal Agreement with the BBC to enable OFCOM to enforce the quotas from 29 December 2003, with the power to impose fines on the Corporation for failing to meet the quotas or require any deficit to be made up in the subsequent year or years.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent discussions she has had with the BBC about the BBC Charter review process; and if she will make a statement. [145478]

Tessa Jowell: My Department maintains regular contact with the BBC with frequent discussions on a wide range of issues including Charter review process.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what targets the Department must meet in relation to the employment of people with disabilities; and if she will make a statement on her Department's progress in meeting these targets. [145599]

Mr. Caborn: The Department has set aspirational targets for the representation of people with disabilities.

	Target (%)	*Actual (%)*
At SCS	5	0
Other grades	5	2.8

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has set a target to have 5 per cent. of posts filled by people with disabilities by March 2005. Data on disability are collected on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are currently no staff filling senior post who have declared a disability. At other grades, the percentage of staff declaring a disability has increased from 2.0 per cent. to 2.8 per cent. over the last 12 months.

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in her Department. [145995]

Mr. Caborn: The Department collects data on disability on a voluntary self-declaration basis. There are currently no members of the Department's senor civil service declaring a disability.

Departmental Mobile Phones

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on mobile phone calls *(a)* in the last year and *(b)* since 1997. [145594]

Mr. Caborn: The cost to my Department of mobile phones supplied to ministers and officials was £25,500 in 2000–01, £21,000 in 2001–02, £29,000 in 2002–03 and £30,000 as of the start of January this year. It is not possible to provide figures prior to 2000 save at disproportionate cost.

Elgin Marbles

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on the Elgin Marbles. [145557]

Estelle Morris: The Government have stated that it considers the Parthenon Sculptures to be a matter for the Trustees of the British Museum, who are independent of government.

Food Advertising

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what representations she has received from *(a)* broadcasters, *(b)* food manufacturers, *(c)* advertisers and *(d)* pressure groups about the regulation of food advertising to children. [145574]

Estelle Morris: In May 2003 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport met representatives of several public health promotion organisations to discuss the regulation of broadcast food advertising to children and has also received correspondence from similar organisations. She also met representatives of the Advertising Association on 16 December about this issue. In addition, Ministers have received correspondence from the commercial broadcasting sector on this matter. The Secretary of State has not received any formal representations from the food and drink industry about the regulation of food advertising to children but is aware of the industry's views.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment the Government has made of whether food advertising contributes to child obesity. [145575]

Estelle Morris: The Department has a responsibility only in relation to broadcast advertising. It has made no separate assessment of the impact of food advertising on childhood obesity but will continue to participate in the Food Standards Agency's consultation on its recent review of the promotion of foods to children.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also asked Ofcom to examine the adequacy of its codes regulating the content of broadcast advertising of food to children and Ofcom has indicated that it will make its own assessment of the evidence.

The impact of food promotion must be considered in the context of the wide range of factors which may have an influence on the increase in childhood obesity, which the Government are addressing through a number of cross-departmental initiatives.

Human Remains (Repatriation)

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the Government's policy is on the repatriation of human remains. [145590]

Estelle Morris: The Government have recently published the Human Tissue Bill, which includes a clause giving certain national museums a power to move human remains out of their collection, where they wish to do so.

This will implement the principal recommendation of the Working Group on Human remains. I shall be issuing a consultation document on the rest of the recommendations of the Working Group early in the new year. The results of that consultation will inform the Government's wider response to the Working Group Report.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list information technology contracts in her Department and its predecessors with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of overruns has been. [146188]

Mr. Caborn: My Department has never had an information technology contract to the value of £20 million since its creation in 1992.

Museums

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make an assessment of the impact of the Government's free admissions policy on museums that are not included in the policy. [145562]

Estelle Morris: There are a number of factors that influence museum attendances, and it would be difficult to isolate the specific impact of free admission. The Renaissance in the Regions programme complements the free admission policy by providing substantial support to regional museums. The early indications are that the Renaissance investment is already paying dividends, with a 40 per cent. increase in the number of schools visiting museums in Phase 1 of the programme, and a 74 per cent. increase in contacts between those museums and community groups.

Ofcom

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the readiness of Ofcom to assume regulatory duties on 29 December. [145086]

Estelle Morris: The Office of Communications (Ofcom) is well prepared to take on its regulatory functions and vesting took place as planned on 29 December 2003.

HEALTH

BCG Vaccination

Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the number of medical professionals trained in the techniques necessary to administer the BCG vaccination. [144390]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* This data is not held centrally. Strategic health authorities are responsible for organising and delivering local immunisation programmes.

Delayed Discharges

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on delayed discharges

in *(a)* the Craven, Harrogate and Rural District Primary Care Trust and *(b)* the Hambleton and Richmondshire Primary Care Trust area. [145621]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Service and Financial Framework returns for quarter two of 2003–04 show that there were 24 patients in the Craven, Harrogate and Rural District Primary Care Trust (PCT) area whose transfer of care had been delayed, and six in the Hambleton and Richmondshire PCT area. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Craven, Harrogate and Rural District PCT has agreed a strategy with all key stakeholders that aims to maintain people in their own homes where possible with support from a multi-disciplinary team. This will ultimately be available 24 hours a day, with access to diagnostics and secondary care as appropriate.

Hambleton and Richmondshire PCT is working with North Yorkshire Social Services to develop interim care beds and alternatives to people waiting in the acute hospital.

Influenza Vaccination

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation of the number of at risk children who would benefit from the current influenza vaccination, broken down *(a)* by type of condition and *(b)* by age groups (i) 0 to four and (ii) five to 14 years. [142963]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* At their meeting on 10 November 2003, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation agreed that all children aged over six months in an at risk group should be offered flu vaccination.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons the Department does not monitor the uptake of influenza vaccinations for children in at risk groups. [142964]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* I refer the hon. Member to the response I gave him on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 890–91W.

Hospital Acquired Infections

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what target he has set for reducing death and disablement from hospital acquired infections. [145047]

Miss Melanie Johnson: No specific targets were set in the Chief Medical Officer's new action plan, "Winning Ways—Working together to reduce Healthcare Associated Infections", launched on 5 December 2003. We will monitor implementation through the national health service performance management system, strategic health authorities and the mandatory surveillance system.

Levonelle

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been conducted in teenage girls on the safety of an increase in the dosage of the emergency hormonal contraceptive Levonelle to a single dose of two tablets taken together. [145303]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The dosing instructions for Levonelle (levonorgestrel 0.75mg) were revised recently to recommend that two tablets should be taken at the same time; previously one tablet was taken with the second tablet 12 hours later. There has been no increase in the dosage as the quantity of levonorgestrel ingested remains the same. This followed advice from the Committee on Safety of Medicines who were satisfied as to the safety and efficacy of this revised regimen and the likely improved compliance. The pivotal evidence in support of the change is a World Health Organisation sponsored study evaluating 4,136 women aged between 14 and 52 years (mean age 27 years) who attended family planning clinics requesting emergency contraception. In excess of 2,700 women were given levonorgestrel, and of these, 439 were teenage girls. Side-effects were minor and no significant difference in the proportion of women developing side-effects was noted between the women taking two levonorgestrel tablets at the same time and those who took them 12 hours apart. A copy of the publication has been placed in the Library.

Medicines (Advertising)

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many staff at the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency are employed to investigate breaches of the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations 1994; [145356]

(2) what the outcomes were of the review of advertising activities carried out by the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency earlier this year; which organisations and individuals were invited to contribute to this review; and how the report has been made publicly available; [145360]

(3) how many of the complaints investigated by the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency were found to be in breach of the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2002 and *(c)* 2003; for each of these years, how many of the complaints that were upheld related to advertisements targeted at (i) health professionals and (ii) the public; over how long on average the advertisements had been running before being withdrawn; and what sanctions were employed; [145361]

(4) what criteria are employed by the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency in investigating complaints; and under what conditions pre-vetting of advertising material is carried out; [145362]

(5) what provisions have been made by the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency to take on additional staff to pre-vet advertising material when medicinal products are switched from prescription-only to over-the-counter status; [145357]

(6) how many complaints were investigated in 2002–03 by the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency in response to complaints from *(a)* health professionals, *(b)* pharmaceutical companies and *(c)* the public; [145358]

(7) what self-regulatory controls are in place for medicine advertising and promotion; and when the Government last carried out a spot check to determine the effectiveness of the self-regulatory system; [145359]

(8) what mechanisms exist for independent scrutiny of the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency activities in relation to its role to monitor and enforce regulations on pharmaceutical company advertising and promotion. [145363]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The control of medicines advertising is based on a long established system of self regulation underpinned by the statutory role of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). There are two main industry self regulatory bodies, the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority (PMCPA) and Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB). Both operate codes of practice for advertising of medicines and systems for investigating complaints against their codes. Advertising by PAGB member companies aimed at the public is pre-vetted by the PAGB prior to publication. There are also general controls on non-broadcast and broadcast advertising operated by the Advertising Standards Authority and the Office of Communications.

Investigation of complaints and routine scrutiny of published advertising for medicines, concentrating on newly licensed products, provide an ongoing check on the effectiveness of the self-regulatory systems for medicines advertising. The MHRA meets regularly with the regulatory and self regulatory bodies to discuss current issues in medicines advertising.

The MHRA investigates all complaints received about advertising against the requirements set out in the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations 1994. In 2002–03, 157 complaints about medicines advertising were investigated including 93 from health professionals, 16 from pharmaceutical companies and 48 from members of the public. The number of advertisements found to be in breach of the Regulations following investigation by the MHRA were 104 in 2001, 85 in 2002 and 108 in 2003. One quarter concerned advertisements aimed at health professionals and the remainder at the public. Information is not collected by the Agency on the length of time the advertisements had been running before being withdrawn.

The primary sanction employed where advertising is considered to breach the Regulations is to require immediate withdrawal and amendment of the material. Additionally, in three cases in 2001, one in 2002 and five in 2003, all subsequent material was required to be submitted for pre-vetting. In 13 cases the company was required to issue a corrective statement, one in 2001, one in 2002 and 11 in 2003. One case was referred for enforcement action in 2001 and two in 2003. A public statement was also recently made on the outcome of three investigations into inducements to pharmacists.

The MHRA has published criteria in Guidance Note 23—Advertising and Promotion of medicines in the UK (a copy of which is available in the Library) based on which it will consider requiring advertising material to be submitted for pre-vetting, including:

(i) where a newly licensed product, subject to intensive monitoring, is placed on the market;

(ii) where a product is reclassified, such as from prescription only medicine to pharmacy; or

(iii) where previous advertising for a product has breached the Regulations.

A recent internal MHRA review considered the procedures of the advertising unit in the regulation of advertising for medicines in the UK. It identified measures to increase and improve the targeting of pre-vetting, increase the use of corrective statements for misleading advertising, take rapid action on complaints prioritising those from health professionals and increase transparency by the publication of reports on completed actions on complaints. The outcome of the review was endorsed by the Medicines Commission and has been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. A copy of the report has also been placed in the Library.

The MHRA employs four staff whose primary role is to regulate advertising for medicines, including investigation of breaches of the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations 1994. These staff draw on the wider resources of the MHRA to provide additional specialist advice on advertising casework as required. The MHRA anticipates that it will be able to manage any increase in the requirement for pre-vetting due to increases in reclassification from prescription only to over-the-counter status from within its existing resources.

The National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee recently scrutinised the work of the MHRA, including its role in reviewing medicines advertising and promotion but did not make any recommendations in this area nor suggest any further review was necessary. The recent initiative to publish on the MHRA website the outcome of complaints investigations will increase the transparency of the MHRA's role in enforcing the regulations on advertising and promotion of medicines.

Screening Programmes

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in proactive screening programmes as a result of departmental awareness-raising schemes; what screening programmes are operating in each health authority area; and what action is being taken to increase screening in areas that are underspending in this area. [144813]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The national breast and cervical screening programmes operate in each strategic health authority area. A number of other national screening programmes are currently being developed. These include screening for Down's syndrome where presently 75 per cent. of maternity units have a screening programme in place. 210,000 babies have been screened under the newborn hearing screening programme since it started. Newborn screening for sickle cell disease is in place in London and West Midlands. Raising public and professional awareness is a key aspect in the development of all screening programmes. Funding to implement screening programmes is mostly included in baseline financial allocations to primary care trusts. In keeping with the decision to enable local PCTs to decide their priorities in the light of their own needs, PCTs decide the allocation of resources locally.

Smoking

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to target smoking cessation activity on middle-aged women. [145227]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The national health service Stop Smoking Services are available to all smokers regardless of age or gender.

The tobacco information programme is designed to address all sections of the adult population and every opportunity is taken to obtain editorial coverage on the health pages of national newspapers and women's magazines.

We are not aware of any specific reason to target "middle aged women" separately. Women aged 35–60 have lower smoking rates than men of the same age and lower than those of young women.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of tuberculosis were reported in *(a)* England, *(b)* each NHS region and *(c)* each strategic health authority in each year since 1996. [146214]

Miss Melanie Johnson: This information is publicly available on the Health Protection Agency website at www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/tb/epidemiology/tables.htm

HOME DEPARTMENT

Antisocial Behaviour

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the number of anti-social behaviour offences occurring over Halloween relative to other periods of the year. [145343]

Ms Blears: No assessment has been made of the number of anti-social behaviour related offences occurring over Halloween, relative to other periods of the year.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been applied for in the Vale of York in each of the past three years. [145123]

Ms Blears: The number of notifications received by the Home Office of applications for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) within the North Yorkshire Magistrates Courts Committee (MCC) area, which includes the Vale of York, up to 30 June 2003 (latest available) is given in the table. All of the applications have resulted in an ASBO being issued.

The number of applications for ASBOs in North Yorkshire, as reported to the Home Office, from 1 June 2000[1] to 30 June 2003 (latest available)

	Number
1 June 2000 to 31 December 2000	0
1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001	7
1 January 2002 to 30 November 2002	0
31 December 2002 to 30 June 2003	2
Total	9

[1] From 1 April 1999 up to 31 May 2000 data collected by police force area (pfa).

Note:

Following implementation of the Police Reform Act (2 December 2002), data for December 2002 is incorporated into the first quarter 2003 data.

Asylum and Immigration

Mr. Dawson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many families are detained under asylum and immigration legislation; and for how long each has been detained. [143801]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: The latest available information shows that at the end of September 2003 1,575 people were detained solely under the Immigration Act, of whom 1,270 had sought asylum at some stage. Information on the number of these who were detained as part of a family group is unavailable.

However, IND internal management information indicates that on 8 December 38 children were in detention. This information also indicates that the average time for which children are detained in UK removal centres is about 10 days. This figure is skewed somewhat due to some long-stay cases. In fact, the bulk of cases are dealt with in a short period. We are working hard to ensure that where children are detained this is for as short a time as possible and are implementing additional measures to ensure the welfare of detained families with children. These measures include requiring ministerial authority to detain any child for longer than 28 days and ensuring that there are no administrative delays which might extend their detention by giving oversight of all children in immigration detention to a senior Home Office official.

Crime Reduction Initiatives

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been invested, and how many schemes have received funding *(a)* in Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East, *(b)* in the north-east and *(c)* in total under the Building Safer Communities initiative. [144748]

Ms Blears: Under the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSC), the following allocations were made in 2003–04 to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) covering the Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East constituency:

Middlesbrough CDRP—£312,409 for 20 schemes

Redcar and Cleveland CDRP—£168,331 for 13 schemes

The North East total allocation for 2003–04 under BSC is £3,549,624.23 CDRP plans were approved and are operational across the region in the current financial year.

Direct funding under BSC to CDRPs in England and Wales totals £72.3 million in 2003–04, involving 376 CDRP plans, each of which includes numerous projects and schemes.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken in *(a)* Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East and *(b)* the north east to help crime and disorder reduction partnerships deliver crime reduction; and if he will make a statement. [144749]

Ms Blears: A wide range of activities is taking place in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, and also in the north east as a whole, to help Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) deliver crime reduction. These are normally funded through Home Office programmes such as the Building Safer Communities Fund, Building Capacity Fund, and Basic Command Unit Fund.

Examples of activities that draw on Home Office funds include, in the Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East area, a dedicated drugs unit being introduced in the Redcar and Cleveland CDRP, and a 'Dealer a Day' initiative initiated by the police commander. This initiative has led to over 950 arrests and the recovery of substantial quantities of drugs, cash and stolen goods. In the East Cleveland area specifically, Home Office funding has led to CCTV

schemes in Saltburn, Guisborough, Loftus, and Marske. In Middlesbrough, recent initiatives have included tackling burglaries in sheds, garages, and outbuildings, and tackling vehicle crime by focusing on 'at risk' groups and locations e.g. subsidised security devices, additional security patrols.

In the north east as a whole, significant developments include the establishment of a multi-agency Regional Drugs Intelligence Unit at a cost of £500,000 over two years, funded by the Home Office Police Standards Unit, and the extension of intensive criminal justice intervention programmes to Newcastle, Sunderland, Hartlepool, and Stockton in addition to the existing programme in Middlesbrough.

The Government Office for the north east provides advice, training and support to all the CDRPs in the region. They act as a conduit for sharing best practice between partnerships, for example, funding a seminar in Middlesbrough for CDRPs across the country with similar characteristics to Middlesbrough, to share common issues and solutions. They regularly attend CDRP meetings to offer advice and information on funding and good practice and to support performance improvement.

The Home Office has introduced a self-assessment framework (SAF) for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Drug Action Teams in England and Community Safety Partnerships in Wales to assist them to improve their performance as partnerships. The SAF is a useful tool to promote continuous improvement in both strategic and operational delivery of the crime reduction and misuse of drugs agendas.

The Home Office are also updating the existing guidance for partnerships on audits and strategies in preparation for the next round of triennial audits which partnerships must produce by April 2005. This new web based step by step toolkit will be available on the Crime Reduction Website from February 2004.

Key crime levels have fallen steadily in the north east in recent years. Between 1998–99 and 2002–03 vehicle crime has fallen by 23 per cent. and domestic burglary has fallen by 25 per cent.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken in *(a)* Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East and *(b)* the north east (i) to reduce gun crime and (ii) to disrupt drugs markets; and if he will make a statement. [144750]

Caroline Flint: We are developing a strong programme to tackle gun crime on a number of fronts, including:

- tackling the links to drug supply and crime;
- reducing the supply and availability of firearms;
- effective police operations to drive down firearm offences;
- tough laws and effective enforcement;
- engaging the worst affected communities to address the underlying gun culture.

In Middlesbrough, Cleveland police operate a dealer-a-day policy whereby they undertake to arrest at least one drugs dealer in the town every day, 365 days a year. It has recently completed its second year of operation and since its launch on 3 December 2001, 926 people have been arrested. Drugs including cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, amphetamine, and cannabis have been recovered with a street value of nearly £950,000. Officers also seized over £200,000 in cash during the raids. Prison sentences exceeding 200 years have been given by the courts, coupled with other forms of sentencing ranging from fines, community work and community rehabilitation, to suspended sentences, supervision orders and drug treatment and testing orders. In July the scheme was extended to cover East Cleveland in July 2003 and similar success is expected there.

Regionally, with the support of Government Office North East, the Police Standards Unit has funded the establishment of a Regional Drugs Intelligence Unit based at Durham Constabulary which brings together analysts from the three north east police forces in one dedicated unit to improve intelligence led work to tackle middle market drug dealing across the region. Set up in October 2003, this unit's work will link in to other information and intelligence gathering initiatives already underway in the north east, including asset recovery.

The north east, and the Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East area in particular, experiences relatively low levels of gun crime. For this reason, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships prioritise actions on addressing drug crime, burglary and vehicle crime in these areas.

We are taking action to tackle the misuse of air weapons. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act will:

- raise the age limit for owning air weapons from 14 to 17;
- restrict their use without adult supervision;
- ban the carrying of replicas or air weapons in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse; and
- ban the sale, manufacture and import of tandem cartridge air systems, such as the Brocock, and require the licensing of those already held as they are particularly vulnerable to conversion to fire live ammunition.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Government-funded schemes resulting in the installation of CCTV cameras have received crime and disorder reduction partnership funds in *(a)* Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East and *(b)* the north east since 2001. [144751]

Ms Blears: Under the Crime Reduction Programme CCTV Initiative, two funding rounds were introduced.

Six schemes were approved in Middlesbrough and six in the Redcar and Cleveland Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) areas.

45 schemes in total were approved for the north east.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken to strengthen co-ordination of local partnerships to ensure they are able to deliver the crime and drugs agenda in *(a)* Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East and *(b)* the north-east. [144752]

Ms Blears: The Home Office and the Government Office in the North East Region (GONE), are working with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and Drug Action Teams (DATs) to ensure the further integration of their work. Guidance on integration was issued to CDRPs and DATs in November 2003. The aim is to simplify local working relationships, give greater recognition to common interests and provide the right framework to enable the effective delivery of the crime reduction and drugs agendas. The crime and drugs teams have been fully integrated within GONE since June 2002.

Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, which are both unitary authorities, are working towards integration of their CDRPs and DATs by April 2004. To support this process the Home Office has introduced a self-assessment framework (SAF), which will enable CDRPs and DATs to assess their performance as partnerships and will assist the GONE in managing the improvement in both their strategic and operational delivery.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on *(a)* improved information sharing between crime reduction partnerships and *(b)* the sharing of good practice techniques between police forces; and how such practices have benefited the residents of Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East. [144754]

Ms Blears: Effective data exchange and analysis is a prerequisite of productive partnership working and crime reduction. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) are encouraged to share information to tackle crime and criminality more effectively within their partnership.

The Home Office Crime Reduction and Community Safety Group is working with the Government Offices in the regions to ensure effective information sharing and data analysis.

The Government Office for the North East is working with every agency in the North East Region who are partners on CDRPs to enhance their data in order to facilitate information sharing, and has developed an IT solution, North East Region Information Sharing System (NERISS), to this end.

Middlesbrough is being used as a pilot site for local data sharing on burglary dwelling to support problem solving and best practice experience nationally.

The Government Office has also been carrying out a research project on Effective Practice and will compile a compendium of all of the initiatives of a crime and disorder nature in the Region. The findings will be published on the internet for use by all practitioners as a Best Practice library.

One of the main roles of the Home Office Police Standards Unit (PSU) is to exchange good practice in order to support the improvement of police performance. The Unit has been working with the Cleveland Police Force on several projects to tackle issues such as burglary reduction with the 'Safer Tees Valley Partnership' to reduce repeat victimisation and the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) forcewide as a tool to improve the detection of all crime. The PSU are currently working with the National Centre for Policing Excellence among other partners to simplify the process of sharing good practice and provide greater access, preferably with a single point of contact.

Government Agencies Information Network (GAIN) is a multi-agency group bringing together intelligence and investigation officers from enforcement agencies in central and local Government to share information for the purposes of crime reduction. The first Strategic Group Meeting of the Regional GAIN Board occurred this month and a range of issues is being progressed within the north-east.

Improved information sharing in Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East and across the north-east has allowed the effective targeting of a number of known criminals. This has contributed to significant reductions in burglary and vehicle crime in the area, especially in Middlesbrough, where burglary fell 22.9 per cent., thefts of motor vehicles fell 15.9 per cent. and thefts from motor vehicles fell 5.6 per cent. between 2001–02 and 2002–03. In Langbaurgh over the same period, burglary fell 20.7 per cent., though thefts of and from motor vehicles both rose.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on police community visibility schemes with particular reference to mobile police stations; and how he estimates such initiatives can reduce crime in the area covered by the Cleveland Police Force. [144755]

Ms Blears: It is for the Chief Constable to decide how best to deploy available resources according to operational priorities and objectives.

Cleveland Police is in the process of reviewing the accessibility of service to more rural areas of the force where mobile police stations may well be a solution. In addition the force is reviewing Community Policing models, in keeping with the Chief Constable's vision of 'Putting People First'. This vision of community policing aims to impact positively on public reassurance in terms of visibility of and accessibility, to officers by providing a minimum level of policing to all communities.This is in line with the National Policing Plan 2004–07 which sets as a key priority for the police service

> "Providing a citizen focused service to the public . . . which responds to the needs of individuals and communities and inspires confidence in the police . . .".

Driving Disqualifications

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people were disqualified from driving in the last five years; [145332]

(2) how many people were disqualified from driving since 2000 as a result of *(a)* drink-driving, *(b)* speeding and *(c)* dangerous or reckless driving. [145333]

Ms Blears: Available information up to 2001, which has been taken from the Home Office Court Proceedings Database, is given in the tables. Information for 2002 will be available early in 2004.

Table A: Number of persons disqualified[1] from driving at all courts for motoring offences, England and Wales, 1997–2001

	Persons disqualified
1997	171,100
1998	159,500
1999	170,500
2000	168,900
2001	177,200

[1] Includes persons disqualified under s 35 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 (penalty points system).

Table B: Number of persons disqualified from driving at all courts by offence group, England and Wales, 2000 and 2001

Offence group	*2000*	*2001*
Driving etc after consuming alcohol or taking drugs[1]	75,200	74,500
Speed limit offences[2]	11,000	10,800
Dangerous driving[3]	3,700	3,700

[1] Offences under the Road Traffic Act 1988 sec 4(1), 4(2), 5(1)(a), 5(1)(b), 6(4) and 777(6).

[2] Offences under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Motor Vehicles (Speed Limits on Motorways) Regs 1973 and Parks Regulation (Amendment) Act 1926-Byelaws made thereunder.

[3] An offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988 sec 2 as amended by the Road Traffic Act 1991 sec 2. There is no specific offence of 'reckless driving'.

Immigration Offences (Employers)

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many employers have been *(a)* prosecuted and *(b)* convicted in relation to an offence under section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 in each of the last six years for which figures are available; and what penalties were imposed. [142158]

Beverley Hughes: The latest available information on the number of persons proceeded against and those found guilty under section 8 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1996, together with the penalties imposed, is shown in the table.

Number of persons proceeded against and those found guilty of offences under section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, England and Wales 1997 to 2002

Offence description/ Statute	*Persons[1] proceeded against*	*Number of offences involved*	*Persons[1] found guilty*	*Persons[1] fined*	*Persons[1] not separately dealt with[2]*
Employing a person subject to immigration control who has attained the age of 16/Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 section 8					
1997[3]	—	—	—	—	—
1998[3]	1	1	1	—	1
1999[3]	4	23	1	1	—
2000[3]	10	32	4	4	—
2001[3]	5	65	1	1	—
2002	2	22	1	1	—

[1] Principal immigration offence basis.

[2] Indicates that a substantive penalty has been imposed on a non-immigration offence dealt with at the same time.

[3] Data have been revised since they were published in the command paper "Control of Immigration Statistics United Kingdom 2001".

The Government have consulted publicly on proposals to strengthen the checks employers are required to carry out under section 8, with a view to improving compliance with and the enforcement of the legislation. The Government are currently considering possible measures in this area as part of their wider strategy on managed migration.

In the long term, a national identity cards scheme will reduce the burden on legitimate employers who already check the immigration status of their employees by giving them an easily understood card to check. It will also assist in prosecuting unscrupulous employers who employ illegal workers for less than the minimum wage and undercut legitimate companies

Information on those people proceeded against under the Immigration Acts was published on 27 November in the command paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2002" (Cm 6053), a copy of which can be found in the Library of the House.

Imutran Xenotransplantation Research

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters the Home Office has received regarding Imutran xenotransplantation research. [143690]

Caroline Flint: The Home Office computerised correspondence tracking system introduced in two stages during 2003 shows that as of 11 November 2003 we have received 228 letters from Members of Parliament about the Imutran xenotransplantation research since 30 January 2003 and 289 letters from members of the public since 25 May 2003. We have no reliable record of the number of letters received on this subject before the introduction of the computerised correspondence tracking system.

I wrote to all Members of Parliament on 15 December 2003 answering the points raised in the latest letter sent by Uncaged Campaigns about the Imutran xenotransplantation research.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest findings of investigations into Imutran xenotransplantation research. [143700]

Caroline Flint: In November 2000, after carefully considering the arguments for an independent judicial inquiry into the matters raised in "Diaries of Despair", the Uncaged Campaigns report on the Imutran xenotransplantation research carried out at Huntingdon Life Sciences, the then Home Secretary (Jack Straw) asked the Chief Inspector of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate to examine the available evidence relating to compliance with the authorities granted to Imutran Limited under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. This compliance review was undertaken as part of the Inspectorate's routine statutory inspection and reporting function. The Chief Inspector's report was published on 13 July 2001 and is available on the Home Office website. Copies were also placed in the House Library.The Chief Inspector's review covered five years of work, involving many thousands of scientific procedures. The review took around 300 man-hours to complete and included scrutiny of all study documents, including material not available during the normal inspection process. The Chief Inspector's findings confirmed that the general level of compliance was good. He also identified five instances of non-compliance by the surgical team. Three

of these were already known to the Home Office and were dealt with in 1997. Neither of the two new infringements merited prosecution and both were dealt with by issuing letters of admonition to those responsible.

The Chief Inspector's review identified no new issues requiring further action or investigations and none have been carried out. However, all subsequent representations and evidence received by the Home Office regarding the Imutran research have been thoroughly and carefully considered and full answers have been provided to them. This includes additional papers published in 2003 by Uncaged Campaigns on its website. All of these papers, and more, were available when the chief inspector carried out his compliance review. They provide no new insights into these matters, nor do we accept that they call into question Home Office conduct or regulation of the Imutran research in any way. In addition, in October 2003, we provided the Home Affairs Committee with a detailed response to a number questions about the Imutran research. This response is available on the Home Office website.

The Imutran licences were revoked in July 2000, following a decision by Imutran and its parent company, Novartis, to transfer its research programme to North America. No xenotransplantation work is now undertaken at Huntingdon Life Sciences.

I wrote to all Members of Parliament on 15 December 2003 answering the points raised in the latest letter sent by Uncaged Campaigns about the Imutran xenotransplantation research.

O2/Police Information and Technology Organisation

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the role of individual police authorities is in the public private partnership between O2 and the Police Information and Technology Organisation; and if he will make a statement. [145192]

Ms Blears: The Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) is a non-departmental public body of the Home Office. The PITO Board includes Association of Police Authorities (APA) members who represent individual police authorities.

The Airwave contract for the new police radio system was awarded by PITO to BT under the Private Finance Initiative, and novated to Airwave mmO2 in November 2001 following the demerger of BT and mmO2.

The Airwave contract was approved by the PITO Board and agreed by all police authorities. It is monitored by the Airwave Programme Board, where APA members represent the interests of individual police authorities.

Police Funding

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account was taken of the extra bank holidays in 2004–05 in the police financial settlement. [140577]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 1 December 2003]:* Account is not taken of variable numbers of bank holidays when determining the annual police grant settlement. Accommodating changes from year to year is a matter for police local management.

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional financial assistance is available from the Home Office to police authorities to cover the cost of large scale and expensive investigations. [144350]

Ms Blears: Police forces are normally expected to meet the cost of large-scale investigations from their own budget and general reserves.

In cases where unforeseen and exceptional costs are substantial, the Home Secretary may consider providing grant towards the additional costs. Cases are considered in the light of individual circumstances and subject to funds being available. Forces will normally be expected to meet initial costs up to 1 per cent. of their annual budget.

Murder Investigations

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account was taken of the financial impact of concurrent murder investigations in Nottingham in the recent police financial settlement. [140579]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 1 December 2003]:* I have decided exceptionally this year to provide a standard rate increase of 3.25 per cent. in general grant for each police authority in England and Wales.

Provision is made within the police funding formula for projected levels of crime, but not at the level of each individual case. It is a matter for the Chief Constable and Police Authority to determine, within the overall resources available, the deployment of resources according to operational priorities and objectives.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the sum representing the difference between the overall 4.2 per cent. cash rise and the 3.25 per cent. standard increase in allocation to police authorities will be spent; how much of it will be allocated to the London Metropolitan Police area; when it will be paid; and if he will make a statement. [141103]

Ms Blears: Total provision for policing to be supported by grant will increase by 4.2 per cent. in 2004–05. This includes principal formula police grant, revenue support grant and the share of national non-domestic rates available to police authorities, specific grants, capital grants, direct Home Office spending and the share of formula spending attributable to local council tax precept under revenue support grant arrangements.

All police authorities in England and Wales will receive a standard increase in unhypothecated general police grant (comprising Home Office police grant, ODPM revenue support grant and national non domestic rates) of at least 3.25 per cent.

In addition, forces will receive grant for a number of specific initiatives. We announced details of the Crime Fighting Fund on 19 November. The Metropolitan Police will receive £73.0 million. Details of other specific initiatives from which the Metropolitan Police Service will benefit are still to be announced. These include Basic Command Unit funding, funding for Community Support Officers, the Street Crime Initiative, special priority Payments, the DNA expansion programme, counter terrorism funding as well as funding for capital purposes. The Metropolitan Police will continue to benefit from 75 per cent. funding of the London Allowance, funding towards free travel for Metropolitan Police Officers and further capital funds towards the Command Control Communications Information system project.

Police (Gloucestershire)

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that there is a new timetable for an improvement in the quality of police files in Gloucestershire by means of Crown Prosecution Service participation in police training. [144015]

Ms Blears: Senior crown prosecutors, including the Chief Crown Prosecutor, have participated in 20 police training exercises in Gloucestershire between August and December 2003. This training has covered a number of issues including: the new charging arrangements; evidential requirements in racially aggravated offences; police file preparation and management; disclosure issues; and identification evidence.

The result of those training exercises is being evaluated and there are plans for a limited number of further training exercises in January and February next year and it is likely the police Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) training programme will be reviewed again at that point with a view to further joint CPS/police training during next year.

There have also been selective police/CPS training exercises designed to improve the quality of files in particularly troublesome cases and these have included rape offences and racially aggravated offences.

Presidential Visit

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the estimated cost was of the police operation to provide security for the visit of President Bush. [143761]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police tells me that the estimated cost of the policing operation in London for this event is £4.2 million. We also understand from Durham Constabulary that the estimated cost of the policing operation for the President's visit to Durham is £1 million.

Roadworks

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what time the *(a)* M20 and *(b)* M26 were closed to traffic on 15 December; at what time each was reopened to traffic on 16 December; and for what reason the roads were not reopened sooner. [145532]

Caroline Flint *[holding answer 5 December 2003]*: Sections of the M20 and M26 motorways were closed to traffic at 10.30pm on 15 December and reopened at 7am on 16 December.

The closure was necessary to enable the police to undertake a full investigation into the three deaths which unfortunately occurred as a result of an accident there.

The length of such investigations is affected, for example, by the need to ensure that small items of evidence are not overlooked, or where artificial light may not be adequate for the proper identification and interpretation of tyre marks, or other vehicles need to be prevented from destroying or obliterating evidence by passing over it.

Sexual Offences

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requirements need to be satisfied in order to issue a Risk of Sexual Harm Order. [143479]

Paul Goggins: The Risk of Sexual Harm Order (RSHO) is a new civil preventative order which is being introduced in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. RSHOs will be available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The RSHO is designed to protect children aged under 16 (17 in Northern Ireland) from sexual harm by adults. We know that some abusers try to prepare children for sexual activity by exposing them to sexually explicit language or images. The RSHO is intended to help the police to prevent such behaviour.

A Chief Officer of police will be able to apply for, and a court will be able to make, a RSHO in respect of a person aged 18 or over where it appears they have, on at least two occasions either:

(a) engaged in sexual activity involving a child or in the presence of a child;

(b) caused or incited a child to watch a person engage in sexual activity or to look at a moving or still image that is sexual;

(c) given a child anything that relates to sexual activity or contains a reference to such activity;

(d) communicated with a child, where any part of the communication is sexual;

And a RSHO is necessary to protect a child (or children) from sexual harm from the defendant.

An application for an order will be by complaint to a magistrates court. The behaviour on which the application for a RSHO is based need not amount, in itself, to a criminal offence and the defendant does not need to have a previous conviction for a sexual (or any other) offence.

A RSHO may prohibit the defendant from doing anything which is necessary to protect a particular child, a group of children or children in general from sexual harm. The order will last for a fixed period of at least two years, or until further notice.

Interim RSHOs will be available to allow prohibitions to be put in place prior to the main application for a RSHO being determined. RSHOs, and interim RSHOs, can be varied, renewed or discharged on further application to the magistrates court by either a chief officer of police or defendant.

The defendant may appeal to the Crown court against the making of a RSHO or interim RSHO or any order made by a court to vary, renew or discharge a RSHO or interim RSHO.

A breach, without reasonable excuse, of any prohibition contained in a RSHO or interim RSHO will be a criminal offence punishable by up to five years imprisonment.

Speed Cameras

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much revenue Essex police received from the operation of *(a)* speed and *(b)* red light cameras in 2002–03; [145166]

(2) how much was levied in fines resulting from *(a)* speed and *(b)* red light cameras in Essex in each of the last five years. [145167]

Caroline Flint: Information on the revenue raised from speed and red light offences detected by camera is not available.

However the table shows, for the Essex police force area, the number of fixed penalties ordered to be paid and the number of court fines for such offences in the calendar years 1997 to 2001 (latest available). Information for 2002 will be available early in 2004.

Not all fines and fixed penalties will have been paid.

Fixed penalty and court proceedings data for speeding and traffic light offences by cameras[1,2,3] in the Essex police force area

	Fixed penalties		Court		
Offence and year	*Number of tickets*	*Estimated revenue[4]*	*Number of fines[5]*	*Total amount of fine (£)*	*Average fine (£)*
Speeding offences[2]					
1997	18,800	*753,700*	880	*93,900*	107
1998	8,700	*346,600*	1,700	*227,400*	134
1999	19,800	*791,400*	2,100	*357,400*	169
2000	46,300	*2,007,200*	2,800	*317,800*	115
2001	81,900	*4,911,100*	6,500	*651,200*	101
Traffic light offences3					
1997	3,400	*136,800*	860	*67,900*	79
1998	2,000	*78,900*	910	*84,600*	93
1999	2,700	*109,500*	590	*48,900*	83
2000	3,800	*165,500*	850	*67,700*	80
2001	3,700	*220,980*	1,100	*88,400*	78

[1] Automatic cameras until 1998, all camera types from 1999.
[2] Offences under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and The Motor Vehicles (Speed Limits on Motorways) Regulations 1973.
[3] Offences under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1994.
[4] Paid i.e. no further action.
[5] Estimate based on £40 fixed penalty charge to October 2000. From November 2000 the penalty was raised to £60.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fixed penalty notices were issued to motorists caught at each location of a fixed speed camera within a Safety Camera Partnership in *(a)* the year prior to installation and *(b)* the year subsequent to installation. [142235]

Caroline Flint: Information collected centrally on the number of fixed penalty notices issued as a result of detection by camera does not identify the type of camera used or its location.

Stop and Search

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times stop and search powers under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 were used in the vicinity of RAF Fairford between 6 March and 27 April. [144695]

Ms Blears: There were 56 searches conducted between 6 March and 27 April 2003 under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 in the vicinity of RAF Fairford between 6 March and 27 April.

Young Offender Institutions

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often children have been held in special cells in Young Offender Institutions since January, broken down by institution; and for how long in each case. [144361]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 15 December 2003]*: Data on the number of times children have been held in a special cell in each juvenile establishment since January 2003 is shown in the following table.

Special accommodation may only be used for the temporary confinement of a violent or refractory prisoner and not as punishment. As soon as the original justification for the use of the special accommodation has ceased, the young person will be moved from that accommodation.

Establishment	*Number of occasions*
Ashfield	0
Brinsford	5
Brockhill	0
Bullwood Hall	3
Castington	4
Eastwood Park	0
Feltham	32
Hindley	1
Holloway	0
Huntercombe	46
Lancaster Farms	27
New Hall	6
Onley	5
Pare	1
Stoke Heath	14
Thorn Cross	0
Warren Hill	6
Werrington	0
Wetherby	4

NORTHERN IRELAND

Assembly Election

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to make an assessment of the procedures for obtaining postal votes in Northern Ireland; and how many *(a)* people applied

for a postal vote in each Northern Ireland constituency and *(b)* postal votes were issued for the Assembly election on 26 November. [142656]

Mr. Spellar: The Electoral Commission, which has statutory responsibility for reporting on the conduct of elections, will issue a report on the recent Assembly elections in the spring. This will include an assessment of the procedures for obtaining postal votes.

It is not possible at this stage to provide information on how many people applied for postal votes in each Northern Ireland constituency. I will ask the Chief Electoral Officer to write to the hon. Member. However, statistics (including postal proxies) on the issuing of postal votes are as follows:

Constituency	*Total number of Absent vote issues*
Belfast, East	502
Belfast, North	620
Belfast, South	573
Belfast, West	543
East Antrim	477
E. Londonderry	1,427
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	4,327
Foyle	1,434
Lagan Valley	1,022
Mid-Ulster	2,814
Newry & Armagh	1,863
North Antrim	1,061
North Down	563
South Antrim	557
South Down	1,701
Strangford	709
Upper Bann	1,118
West Tyrone	2,942
Total	24,253

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many eligible voters in each Northern Ireland constituency were turned away from polling stations in Northern Ireland on 26 November for not having correct identification for the Assembly election. [142661]

Mr. Spellar: The type of identification brought by voters was recorded for approximately 92 per cent. of all voters at the Assembly election on 26 November. Particularly during the busiest times of polling day not all information on identification was recorded.

Approximately 3,493 electors were recorded as having brought the wrong identification documents or no identification whatsoever. However, there is evidence that some of these returned before the close of poll with an alternative, correct form of ID and were able to cast their vote at that time.

The totals recorded are as follows:

Constituency	*Total number of voters with wrong or no identification*
Belfast, East	128
Belfast, North	148
Belfast, South	139
Belfast, West	246
East Antrim	145
E. Londonderry	133
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	254
Foyle	211
Lagan Valley	153
Mid-Ulster	266
Newry & Armagh	304
North Antrim	240
North Down	125
South Antrim	161
South Down	192
Strangford	158
Upper Bann	247
West Tyrone	243

Belfast City Airport

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the main interested parties and local resident groups in relation to the review of the Planning Agreement affecting *(a)* traffic volumes and *(b)* operational hours at Belfast City Airport; and if he will make a statement. [145177]

Angela Smith: I have not received any approach from Belfast City Airport about a review of the Planning Agreement and therefore have had no discussions with the main interested parties or local residents groups in relation to either traffic volumes or operational hours.

Benefit Payment Arrangements

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much funding was allocated for the advertising campaign for the direct payment of pensions and benefits. [145312]

Mr. Spellar: The amount of funding allocated to the advertising campaign for direct payment in Northern Ireland to March 2004 is £728,930. To date the Social Security Agency has invested £591,430.

Civil Service (Fair Employment)

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what options are available to applicants to the Northern Ireland Civil Service when declaring their religion on its fair employment monitoring form; what plans he has to amend the arrangements to cater for a wider variety of community backgrounds; and if he will make a statement. [142691]

Mr. Pearson: Since 1990, employers in Northern Ireland, including the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), have had a legal duty under fair employment legislation to monitor the community background of their workforces and of those applying to fill vacancies.

The legislation requires the NICS to ask applicants, in writing, whether they belong to the Protestant or the Roman Catholic community or to neither community. The NICS meets this requirement by asking each applicant to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form, which is included with every job application form. Applicants are asked to select one of the following options:

I have a Protestant community background

I have a Roman Catholic community background

I have neither a Protestant nor a Roman Catholic community background

There are no plans to amend the monitoring Regulations and, as the NICS is bound by these Regulations, neither are there plans to change the Service's current arrangements to include other community backgrounds.

Compensation Agency

Mr. Donaldson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many claims for compensation have been paid by the Compensation Agency in respect of damage to Orange halls in each of the past five years, broken down by county; and what the total value was of the compensation paid for these claims; [145551]

(2) how many claims for compensation made to the Compensation Agency have been unsuccessful in respect of damage to Orange halls in each of the past five years, broken down by county; [145552]

(3) how many claims for compensation have been made to the Compensation Agency in respect of damage to Orange halls in each of the past five years, broken down by county; [145553]

(4) how many Chief Constable's certificates have been issued in respect of claims made to the Compensation Agency for damage to Orange halls in each of the past five years, broken down by county. [145554]

Mr. Spellar: The Chief Executive of the Compensation Agency has written to the hon. Gentleman. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Doctors

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the impact on the Health Service in Northern Ireland of the restriction in working hours of junior doctors under the European Working Time Directive, with particular reference to *(a)* ward numbers and *(b)* specialist services. [144264]

Angela Smith: From August 2004, doctors in training will become subject to the working restrictions applicable under the European Working Time Directive. A substantial programme of work is under way, in partnership with the HPSS Boards and Trusts here, to ensure compliance with this Directive across all employing organisations, and all specialties within each organisation.

Trusts have been asked to provide action plans showing how they will achieve compliance with the EWTD by August 2004. The HPSS Junior Doctors Implementation Support Group, established in 2001 to oversee implementation of the New Deal for Doctors in Training, is currently assessing these Action Plans and is taking a regional view of how EWTD will impact. The Implementation Support Group is expected to make recommendations to my Department shortly on the best way forward.

To support HPSS Employers, my Department has already published a range of guidance on EWTD, monitoring Junior Doctor working patterns and developing new means of delivering the service. In addition, we are currently monitoring the progress of a number of pilot projects that are being undertaken within the NHS in England. These pilots are developing and testing further methods of how employers can achieve compliance with the European Working Time Directive. My Department will be seeking to determine which of these pilots can apply in an equally beneficial manner within the Health Service in Northern Ireland.

Fuel Poverty

Mr. Roy Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to assist those pensioners with small occupational pensions or savings who are not eligible for the Warm Homes Scheme to upgrade to a non-manual central heating system. [145313]

Mr. Spellar: The eligibility criteria for the Warm Homes Scheme is kept under regular review to ensure that as many vulnerable people as possible can benefit. For example, it was recently revised to include pension credit.

Pensioners with additional income who are ineligible for assistance through the Warm Homes Scheme may qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant which includes provision for assistance towards the cost of replacing heating systems.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the average time taken in the last 12 months was to process assessments of applications to upgrade heating systems through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme, broken down by Health and Social Services trust area. [145314]

Mr. Spellar: The information is not available in the format requested as works required to be carried out in a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) application are not recorded separately. DFG covers a wide range of works for access to and around a house as well as facilities within a house. Where a heating upgrade is required this is likely to form only a small part of the works required.

In DFG cases generally, the average time taken from date of receipt of preliminary inquiry to the issue of schedule of works for DFGs in the year up to the end of October 2003 was 278 days. This figure includes the time for the occupational therapist's assessment, which took an average of 192 days.

Once the applicant has decided to proceed with the grant application, the average time from the receipt of completed documentation to the issue of formal approval, including the test of resources, was 131 days. Over the last six months 98 per cent. of cases have been processed within the agreed target time of 26 weeks.

The Housing Executive is currently reviewing its arrangements regarding the processing of DFG cases with the aim of further reducing the processing time for the stages that are within its direct control.

Hare Population

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in

introducing the proposed temporary ban on the killing or taking of Irish hares; and if he will make a statement. [144386]

Angela Smith: Having carefully considered all the objections to the proposed ban, I have decided to proceed with making a Special Protection Order, under the Game Preservation Act (NI) 1928, which will impose a ban on the killing, taking, sale or purchase of Irish Hares with effect from 19 January 2004 for a period of one year.

This temporary ban is a precautionary measure which will allow the Department of the Environment the opportunity to conduct further detailed research on the Irish Hare in early 2004. The results of this research work will inform the Department's conclusions on the level of protection required for the Irish Hare, as part of a current overall review of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985. This review will consider the status of several species of animals, birds and plants, with a view to providing adequate protection for a wide range of Northern Ireland's varied wildlife.

Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many public sector dwellings are in the ownership of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the Portstewart area; and what plans are in place to provide for social housing in this area. [145101]

Mr. Spellar: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has 209 properties in the Portstewart area and has identified a requirement for an additional 22 houses that will be built by Housing Associations. Some sites for these properties have already been acquired and four houses have been built while eight are programmed to start in 2004–05. Housing Associations, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, are actively investigating possible locations for other sites for the remaining 10 properties.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the potential demand for new homes in Northern Ireland in the next five years; whether he expects this demand to be met; and if he will make a statement. [144347]

Mr. Spellar: The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 established a need for 160,000 additional dwellings in Northern Ireland by 2015 and 250,000 by 2025.

Progress is monitored and reported annually. The Strategy will be reviewed in 2011/2012 to consider if major changes of direction are required in light of new trends and circumstances. There will be a focused reassessment of the Regional Development Strategy in 2006/2006 to identify any aspects where 'in course' adjustments might be appropriate.

In terms of social housing, the Net Stock Model—the basis for calculating the number of social houses to be built has identified a need for some 1,500 annually. The model is, however, currently under review and the figures will be adjusted in the light of this. I will continue to bid for the funding to support whatever level of new build social housing is required.

Midwife-led Maternity Units

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what means he used to find out what people think of the Government's proposals for establishing stand-alone, midwife-led maternity units. [144777]

Angela Smith: In line with my predecessor's commitment, I issued a consultation document on Community Midwifery Units on 30 June 2003.

As part of the consultation process, advertisements were placed in the main regional newspapers. The consultation document was made available on my Department's website and was also issued to a wide range of organisations and individuals. In addition, my Department commissioned the Community Development and Health Network to undertake a series of focus groups across Northern Ireland. These focus groups were specifically targeted to obtain responses from both potential service users and those groups least likely to respond to government consultations.

The consultation period closed on 31 October. Officials are now in the process of drawing together an analysis of the responses received.

Modern Apprenticeship Courses

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people enrolled on a modern apprenticeship course in September 2003. [145308]

Jane Kennedy: 869 young people were enrolled on a Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship programme during September 2003.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive plans for reducing the time taken to process grant applications for home improvements. [145105]

Mr. Spellar: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has initiated the Modernising the Private Sector Improvement Services project. The main aim of this project is to streamline the grants process and make it easier for applicants. Preliminary work has been undertaken on the project including a review of processes and the preparation of detailed requirements for a new Grants Management IT System. Work on the IT system is planned to start early in 2004 and it is anticipated that it will be complete in two years. However, it is expected that, during this process, procedures will be identified that can be streamlined within the overall timeframe for the project.

Applications for small scale works made under Home Repairs Assistance Grant, which was introduced from 1 December 2003, can be processed in a comparatively short time to help the elderly and those with disabilities.

Election Candidates

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his policy is on whether a member of the *(a)* Human Rights Commission and *(b)* Equality Commission may accept a nomination to contest an

election for (i) a district council, (ii) the Northern Ireland Assembly and (iii) the Westminster Parliament; and what account he took of the Paris Principles in determining that policy. [145212]

Mr. Spellar: Members of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission cannot accept a nomination to contest an election for the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Westminster Parliament under the terms of the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975 and the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975.

Post Office

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the major banking groups in Northern Ireland regarding access to bank accounts at post offices. [145310]

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

All the major banking groups in Northern Ireland are playing a full role in universal banking services at the Post Office, making their own basic bank accounts accessible at post offices and contributing towards the costs of the Post Office card account. Whether they provide access to other accounts at post offices is a commercial matter between the individual banks and the Post Office. I would welcome all banks making all their current accounts accessible at post offices for the benefit of their customers.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have opened a Post Office Card Account. [145311]

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

I understand from Post Office Ltd. as of 5 December 2003, 1,165,147 Post Office card accounts had been opened.

Public Transport

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vehicles in the *(a)* Ulsterbus fleet and *(b)* Citybus fleet are (i) in operation and (ii) undergoing repair and maintenance. [144224]

Mr. Spellar: Translink has advised that routinely 1025 buses in the Ulsterbus fleet are operational and 114 are undergoing repair and maintenance and 226 buses in the Citybus fleet are operational and 40 are undergoing repair and maintenance.

Roads

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to amend the criteria used to determine the need for road dualling on major trunk roads; and if he will make a statement. [144240]

Mr. Spellar: The Chief Executive of Roads Service has written to the hon. Gentleman in response to this question. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Sexual Health Services

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he will take to increase funding for sexual health services in Northern Ireland. [145428]

Angela Smith: The Department, through its Regional Advisory Committee on Communicable Disease Control, commissioned a local review of sexual health issues. The resulting comprehensive report on "Sexually Transmitted Infections and Genito-urinary Medicine Services" was issued to Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts for implementation on 14 April 2003.

This was followed by the Department's "Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan", which has been issued for a period of consultation finishing on 19 March 2004. The aim of the Strategy is to improve, protect and promote the sexual health and well-being of the population in Northern Ireland, along with addressing issues relating to education, access to information and services. It also addresses issues such as reducing rates of sexually transmitted infections and Aids.

In the meantime, my Department, in conjunction with Boards and Trusts, is identifying opportunities to improve Genito-urinary Medicine services, along with the necessary resources to sustain service development.

University Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of students attending university in each of the last five years came from families where *(a)* one or more of the parents also attended university and *(b)* neither parent attended university. [145305]

Jane Kennedy: The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) does not collect information on the past educational participation of current students' parents.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students who enrolled at university in Northern Ireland failed to complete their course in each of the last five years. [145309]

Jane Kennedy: The following table (published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England) details the number of full-time, first degree, entrants to university in Northern Ireland who neither continued into the following year of their course nor successfully completed their programme of study, over the period 1996–97 to 2000–01.

Year of entry	*Number of non-completers*
2000–01	694
1999–2000	625
1998–99	931
1997–98	566
1996–97	513

WORK AND PENSIONS

Draft Disability Discrimination Bill

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for what reasons it is proposed to extend the definition of disability in the Draft Disability Discrimination Bill to include people infected by HIV. [145729]

Maria Eagle: People with progressive conditions, such as HIV infection, are already covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 from the point at which the condition gives rise to an impairment which has some effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities, and which will be likely to have a substantial adverse effect. The Government are proposing to cover people with HIV infection before symptoms develop because it is concerned that discrimination can arise at a much earlier stage.

Assaults on Staff

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many *(a)* physical and *(b)* non-physical assaults there have been on staff in the (i) Employment Service, (ii) Benefits Agency and (iii) Jobcentre Plus in each year since 2001; how many prosecutions resulted; what penalties were handed down; and if he will make a statement. [141504]

Mr. Browne: The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, David Anderson. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from David Anderson to Mr. Mike Hancock, dated 15 December 2003:

As Jobcentre Plus is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply direct to your question on the number of physical and non-physical assaults there have been on staff in the Employment Service, Benefits Agency and Jobcentre Plus in each year since 2001 and how many prosecutions and penalties resulted. This is something that falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Information on the number of incidents occurring in our offices since 2001 is in the table:

Physical and Non-Physical Assaults 2001–2003

	2001		*2002*		*2003*[3]	
	Physical contact	*Verbal abuse*	*Physical contact*	*Verbal abuse*	*Physical contact*	*Verbal abuse*
ES Offices	222	3,637	44	1,026	—	—
BA Offices	135	4,910	34	1,128	—	—
Pathfinder Offices[1]	1	108	2	171	—	—
Jobcentre Plus[2]	—	—	207	4,299	188	5,648

[1] Pathfinder Offices commenced on 1 October 2001.
[2] Jobcentre Plus was launched April 2002. All sites were Jobcentre Plus sites from that date.
[3] Data reported for 2003 is up to and including 28 November.
Source:
Occupational Health and Safety Division

Physical contact is when a customer directly touches a member of staff with or without an object. It includes striking, pushing, spitting and throwing of objects—large or small. Non-physical contact mainly involves verbal abuse but can include throwing of objects that miss or hit screens.

Historically there has been under-reporting of incidents. Increased awareness of Health and Safety and encouragement by management and trade unions to report incidents have contributed to the increased number of incidents being notified.

Information on prosecutions and penalties since Jobcentre Plus came into existence is shown in the table below. We do not have information available for 2001. Data on penalties indicates the number of banning orders imposed on customers who have a history of behaving in an unacceptable manner. Banning orders prevent these customers from entering any Jobcentre Plus premises.

	Prosecutions	*Penalties*
2002	1	430
2003	1	600

Source:
Occupational Health and Safety Division

I hope this is helpful.

Fareham Jobcentre

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many staff are located at the former jobcentre premises at 187–199 West Street, Fareham; [143697]

(2) what the *(a)* annual rental and *(b)* unexpired lease period is of the former jobcentre premises at 187–199 West Street, Fareham; [143698]

(3) if he will make a statement on the future use by the Department of the former jobcentre premises at 187–199 West Street, Fareham. [143699]

Mr. Browne *[holding answer 11 December 2003]*: The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, David Anderson. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from David Anderson to Mr. Mark Hoban, dated 15 December 2003:

As Jobcentre Plus is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply direct to your questions about the use by Jobcentre Plus of the former Jobcentre premises at 187–199 West Street, Fareham. This is something that falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Jobcentre Plus has been established to deliver a radical change in the way that benefits and employment services are provided to people of working age. By 2006, we plan to introduce a network of around 1000 fully integrated Jobcentre Plus offices.

The Jobcentre Plus Implementation Programme for Hampshire commenced in June 2002. Following a period of consultation, the former Social Security Office at Civic Way, Fareham, was identified as being suitable for use as a new Jobcentre Plus site. Following adaptations to the premises, the new office opened on 22 April 2003.

It was clear throughout this process that the site, though suitable for the delivery of the new Jobcentre Plus services, would not be big enough to house all of the staff currently working in Fareham. Therefore, the premises at 187–199 West Street, formerly the Jobcentre, was retained as an "overspill" site. Further acquisitions, together with other new Jobcentre Plus sites that open during the coming months, may influence space requirements across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This in turn, may impact upon the need to retain the use of this particular building.

Currently, the office accommodates a total of 35 staff, transferred following the opening of our new Jobcentre Plus site. Of this total, eleven are engaged in the processing of Jobseeker's Allowance claims; twelve are staff from the Pensions Service and twelve from the Counter Fraud Investigation Service. The present complement of Counter Fraud Investigation Service staff will be joined by a further fourteen members of staff from our Employer Collusion Team with effect from 14 January 2004.

The premises at West Street, with effect from 15 December 2003, will be controlled by TRILLIUM, under the Private Sector Resource Initiative for the Management of Estate. For this reason, information about annual rental and lease agreement is classed as commercial in confidence and so cannot be provided.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobseekers

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the pre-Budget report, paragraph 4.10, if he will list those organisations that will delivery mandatory short intensive work-focused courses for all jobseeker's allowance claimants aged 25 or over at the six month stage; and if he will list the pilot areas. [145113]

Mr. Browne: The mandatory short intensive work-focused courses for jobseeker's allowance claimants aged 25 and over will be piloted from June 2005. Following detailed planning and development, we will seek skilled providers through normal Jobcentre Plus procurement processes. Pilot areas are yet to be selected.

New Deal

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) pursuant to the pre-Budget report, paragraph 4.62, what independent assessment has been undertaken to learn from the best current New Deal provision; [145114]

(2) pursuant to the pre-Budget report, paragraph 4.63, what independent assessment has been undertaken to consider the scope for simplifying current processes to make systems easier for *(a)* employers, *(b)* clients, *(c)* advisers and *(d)* providers. [145115]

Mr. Browne: We have commissioned a large amount of independent research on the New Deals including: "Synthesising the evidence on flexible delivery" (W171: ECOTEC and Insite, October 2003); "New Deal for Young People: Introducing a more 'tailored' approach" (W164: ECOTEC and Insite, September 2003); and "New Deal for people aged 25 and over: A Synthesis Report" (W163: Policy Studies Institute, June 2003), which are available in the Library. Independent research has not been undertaken to look specifically at simplifying current processes.

We will be looking critically at our administration of employment programmes to identify whether there is scope for simplification.

Pensions

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will take steps to amend the 25 per cent. rule to enable those with less than 10 years' full contributions to receive a pension. [145469]

Malcolm Wicks: We have no plans to change the 25 per cent. rule.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the annual cost of sending out reminder letters to pensioners informing them that they are entitled to receive winter fuel payments was in each year since inception of the payments; and if he will make a statement. [145376]

Malcolm Wicks: Information is not available in the format requested. In accordance with the requirements of Resource Accounting and Budgeting the Department now accounts for its administration and benefit expenditure by Strategic Objective, as set out in its Public Service Agreements (PSA), and by individual requests for Resources (RfRs) as set out in the Departmental Estimates and Accounts. This means that the Department is unable to identify the administrative costs of individual activities within the delivery of specific benefits.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

House of Lords

Lady Hermon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what assessment he has made of the number of peers who would be interested in relinquishing their right to sit in the House of Lords. [145068]

Mr. Leslie: The Government have not made any formal assessment of the number of peers who would be interested in relinquishing their current right to sit in the Lords, but have sought views on the desirability of introducing provisions to allow for voluntary resignation from the Lords in their Consultation paper, "Constitutional Reform; Next Steps for the House of Lords". The Government are currently analysing all the responses submitted during the consultation exercise, including a number of responses from peers, and will publish their analysis of the consultation responses, along with their plans for reform of the House of Lords in due course.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many members he expects the statutory independent Appointments Commission for the House of Lords will have; how many members of the Commission will be appointed; and if he will make a statement. [145069]

Mr. Leslie: The recent consultation paper, "Next Steps for the House of Lords", consulted on the proposed statutory independent Appointments Commission for the House of Lords. The consultation period ended on 12 December 2003, and the Government are in the process of analysing responses to the consultation. The Government will publish an analysis of the consultation in due course, and intend to introduce legislation this session to establish the new Commission.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many responses he received to the "Constitutional Reform: Next Steps for the House of Lords" consultation document; how many of these responses came from *(a)* Government Departments and agencies, *(b)* political parties and hon. Members, *(c)* peers currently serving in the House of

Lords, *(d)* peers removed under the House of Lords Act 1999, *(e)* main representative groups and interested parties and *(f)* ecclesiastical representatives and organisations in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland; and when the Government intend to issue their response to the responses received. [145071]

Mr. Leslie: The consultation period for the consultation paper, "Constitutional Reform: Next Steps for the House of Lords", closed on 12 December 2003. By 18 December, 204 responses had been received from a range of interested parties and responses are still being received. The Government are still considering those responses, including a precise analysis of who responded, and will publish that information and their conclusions in due course.

Draft Mental Incapacity Bill

Mr. Drew: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for an individual of having a parent, sibling or peer designated with enduring power of attorney, with particular reference to the Draft Mental Incapacity Bill. [145204]

Mr. Lammy: Under the Draft Mental Incapacity Bill, an individual will be able to create a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). LPAs will replace the current Enduring Power of Attorneys and will allow donors to appoint attorneys to make either financial decisions or health care and welfare decisions on their behalf, should they lose capacity in the future.

In making an LPA, individuals will have choice on who they appoint as an attorney—there is no limitation to a parent, sibling or peer. The important factor is that the individual chooses someone that they know and trust.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what plans his Department has to support the work of professionals who are required to give evidence to the Court of Protection under the provisions of the Draft Mental Incapacity Bill. [145205]

Mr. Lammy: Under the Draft Mental Incapacity Bill, the Court of Protection will be available to deal with cases of dispute which cannot be resolved in any other way. The intention is that most cases, as now, will not need to be resolved by formal processes. The procedures will make it simple for professionals and others to make representations to the court.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Regional Assemblies

Andrew George: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the range of *(a)* non-departmental public bodies and *(b)* other autonomous public bodies operating in the Government regions of the (i) north-east, (ii) north-west and (iii) Yorkshire and the Humber where functions could be brought under the control of the proposed regional assemblies. [145915]

Mr. Raynsford: Public bodies in the north-east including those that would be brought under elected assemblies were set out in the White Paper, "Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions", published in May 2002. Similar arrangements apply in the north-west and Yorkshire and the Humber. Since then the Government have confirmed that Elected Regional Assemblies will also assume responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service in their region.

Mr. Curry: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what the cost was of literature printed for the information campaign, "Elected Regional Assembly: Your Say"; [145989]

(2) what the cost was of each item of promotional material for the information campaign, "Elected Regional Assembly: Your Say". [146046]

Mr. Raynsford: Material produced for the design of the Your Say information campaign, such as exhibition stands and leaflets will continue to be used throughout the information campaign in the three northern regions.

The available cost breakdown for literature and other promotional material so far are:

	£
Creative costs	40,000
Leaflet design, including photography, artwork and printing	31,500
Translations	10,000
Exhibition stands	49,000
Stakeholder and press packs for the launch	4,000

Fire Authority Grant

Helen Jackson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister by how much in total fire authorities have exceeded their grant increase over each of the past five years. [143971]

Mr. Raynsford: The amount by which the increase in fire authority precepts has exceeded the increase in grant for the years 1998–99 to 2003–04 is tabled as follows.

Period	*Amount by which increase in precepts exceeds grants to the nearest whole £ million*
1998–99 to 1999–2000	0
1999–2000 to 2000–01	0
2000–01 to 2001–02	-3
2001–02 to 2002–03	-1
2002–03 to 2003–04	8

This table covers the six Metropolitan County Fire authorities. These were the only single-service fire authorities which received grants and which were in existence throughout the period from 1998–99 to 2003–04. In each year, grants have been compared with previous years' grants on a like-for-like basis, taking into account adjustments for changes in function and funding.

The data for the years 1998–99 to 2002–03 is outturn data taken from the RS forms. The data for 2003–04 is budget data taken from the RA forms as outturn data is not yet available. These forms are completed each year by individual local authorities.

The grants included are redistributed business rates and Revenue Support Grant. Amounts received under the SSA Reduction Grant (SSA Review) and Central Support Protection Grant have also been included, where appropriate.

Fire Service College

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister in relation to the Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, what the total Government grant was in the last financial year; for what purposes it was given; for what reason the college made a loss in the last financial year; and why the annual accounts for the year ended March 2003 state that the college is unlikely to do better than break-even in the year to 31 March 2004. [145789]

Phil Hope: Grant totalling £625,000 was paid to the Fire Service College in 2002–03, for the Brigade Command Course. The College's ability to trade in both the latter part of 2002–03 and the first quarter of 2003–04 was adversely affected by the fire dispute, which resulted in the cancellation of courses. Overseas trading by the College was also constrained by the international situation. The introduction of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) in the UK Fire and Rescue Service from November 2003 is requiring the development of a new suite of IPDS-compliant training courses by the College to replace traditional courses. This has caused some disruption in business as fire and rescue services adapted to the new requirements and delayed the take-up of some College training capacity this year.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what steps are being taken to integrate the Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, training facilities with regional fire service training facilities; what steps are being taken to encourage foreign fire service training business to the college; what investigations are being undertaken into the feasibility of privatising or other alternative trading methods for the college; and what other trading opportunities the college is investigating. [145790]

Phil Hope: The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" published in June 2003 sets out a vision for the Fire Service College as a national Centre of Excellence for the UK Fire and Rescue Service (UKFRS), and further details on the College's role are provided in the Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework published in December 2003. The Framework trails a national workforce development strategy that will set out the respective roles for training providers at national, regional and local level. There are no specific proposals to integrate the College's facilities with regional fire service training facilities.

The College is working to develop other markets both in the UK fire industry and with overseas fire and rescue services. It is developing an enhanced training portfolio, with increased emphasis on outreach training, and distance and e-learning capabilities. Options for involving private sector partners in aspects of the College's trading are being actively explored.

Homelessness

Simon Hughes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) how many people were homeless in *(a)* London and *(b)* England in each year since 1997; [143993]

(2) how many families have claimed to be homeless in *(a)* London and *(b)* England in each year since 1997. [143994]

Yvette Cooper: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 142W.

Housing

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the housing industry on the relationship between mortgage ineligibility of young people and access to affordable housing. [144095]

Keith Hill: None, but wider issues about affordable housing are discussed with the housing industry on many occasions.

Mrs. Helen Clark: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what impact the Inland Revenue's ruling of 24 October will have on the standard of housing in Peterborough; [145740]

(2) what impact the delay in the transfer of homes to Crosskeys Homes will have on the local authority's short-to-medium term housing policy. [145741]

Keith Hill: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 745–46W.

Dr. Whitehead: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many new or additional homes he expects to be provided in *(a)* the South East and *(b)* the South West by the end of 2006; and how many of these homes he expects to be available at affordable prices for households on average income. [145752]

Keith Hill: Regional Planning Guidance 9 for the South East and 10 for the South West each require, over the six year period to the end of 2006 for approximately 234,000 and 121,000 additional dwellings to be provided in the wider South East (including Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire) and the South West respectively. Of these the indicative targets in the two RPGs indicate that at least 108,000 and 36,000 additional dwellings should be provided over this period at affordable prices for households on or below average income.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the minimum building distance from a nuclear power station is, for industrial structures which are not part of the plant. [145742]

Keith Hill: There is no specified minimum distance that has to be maintained between a nuclear power station and another industrial structure that is not a part of the power station plant. The decision on whether any proposed development should be permitted to take place within the vicinity of a nuclear power station is a matter for the local planning authority, taking advice from the Health and Safety Executive on the suitability of the development with regard to the potential off-site risk.

Planning Inspectorate

Denzil Davies: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many persons applied for the recently advertised post of non-executive director to serve on the Management Board and Audit Committee of the Planning Inspectorate. [145464]

Yvette Cooper: 21 people applied for the posts, of whom 12 were male and nine female. Seven candidates were selected for interview, three male and four female. Elizabeth Peace and Jonathan Vickers were selected to take up the appointments from 1 January 2004. Both appointments will run for two years with an option to extend for another two.

Regional Housing Boards

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the priorities of each of the regional housing boards in England. [145967]

Keith Hill: The Regional Housing Boards were asked to identify each region's priorities in line with their Regional Housing Strategies. These were drawn up by those organisations represented on the Board, in full consultation with key regional stakeholders. The priorities reflect not only regionally identified issues, but also national policies. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has allocated nearly £5 billion for next year and the year after to address the priorities set out in the Regional Housing Strategies.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 7 January 2004

TREASURY

Annuities

Kevin Brennan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he will take to improve competition in the market for bulk-buying of index linked annuities; and if he will make a statement. [145727]

Ruth Kelly: The operation of the market in bulk annuities is a commercial matter for the companies and pension schemes concerned.

BCCI

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters relating to BCCI and *(a)* the Bank of England and *(b)* his Department are outstanding; whether any of these matters could carry a liability to the public purse; and if he will make a statement. [146359]

Ruth Kelly: The Bank of England's position on the impending legal proceedings relating to BCCI, including an indication of costs already incurred, is set out on pages 35–37 and 91 of its 2003 annual report. A further update will be given in this year's annual report.

The Treasury are not a party to these proceedings.

The Treasury are considering a request unrelated to the legal proceedings against the Bank of England for the release of a BCCI-related document. This has no implications for the public purse.

Child Trust Funds

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information will be provided to *(a)* children and *(b)* parents to show them how different investment scenarios will affect the return on their child trust funds, with particular regard to how (i) equities, (ii) cash and (iii) bonds are likely to perform. [145697]

Ruth Kelly: The Government want parents to engage actively with the child trust fund (CTF) and recognise that, for many parents, this may be their first investment product. We will provide resources to ensure parents are helped to make choices about their child's CTF, including an information pack, which will be issued alongside the CTF voucher and a dedicated CTF website.

Information will include illustrations of investment returns, which will also be of interest to children as they grow older. Annual statements issued by providers to all children, and teaching and learning resources for use in the classroom, will also help children engage with their accounts and develop an understanding of how different investments could affect returns.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for those on non-family benefits should they wish to make contributions to child trust funds. [145700]

Ruth Kelly: Money held in children's child trust fund (CTF) accounts will not affect family benefits claimed by a child's household.

The Government will keep under review the treatment of capital in income-related benefits so that a sensible balance is struck between providing state support and not unfairly penalising those who have acted responsibly by saving. As a first step, the Government announced on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1344 that, from April 2006, the £3,000 threshold above which savings reduce eligibility to income support, jobseeker's allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit will be increased to £6,000 in line with pension credit.

The pension credit rules include protection against capital deprivation to deal with cases where the real reason behind disposing of savings is to access pension credit or increase the amount of pension credit payable.

Whether payment into a CTF is treated as a deprivation of capital will depend on all the circumstances of the case. However, in most cases it is unlikely that modest contributions to a CTF would be treated as deprivation of capital.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [146002]

Ruth Kelly: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the civil service statistics website at http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf.

This information is also made available in the Library of the House. The latest statistics show staffing data as at 1 April 2003. The data shows that in my department there are no senior civil servants who have declared a disability. The Treasury target for the proportion of people in senior posts who have declared a disability is 3 per cent.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144984]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested is available on the Civil Service Statistics website at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

This information is also available in the Library of the House. The latest statistics show staffing data as at 1 April 2003. The data show that:

in the Inland Revenue there are 10 senior civil servants with a disability, 3.1 per cent. of the total number of senior civil servants in that Department;

in Customs and Excise there is a number less than five, which is 2.9 per cent. of the total number of senior civil servants; and in the Treasury there are no senior civil servants with a disability.

Equity Release Schemes

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research his Department has undertaken to assess the benefits consumers perceive if financial products, with particular reference to equity release policies, are regulated by the Government. [145717]

Ruth Kelly: A regulatory impact assessment was published on 5 June 2003 that set out the costs and benefits of giving the Financial Services Authority (FSA) responsibility for regulating mortgages, including mortgage-based equity release schemes. This is available from the Treasury website: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

The purpose of the consultation paper, "Regulating Home Reversion Plans", is to arrive at a more in-depth analysis of the costs and benefits of the regulation of home reversion equity release plans. A draft regulatory impact assessment was included as Annex B to that document and we look forward to receiving views on that, as well as other aspects of the consultation.

European Investment Services Directive

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what discussions he has had with business organisations about the impact the European Investment Services Directive will have on their companies, with specific reference to the impact that the end of execution-only sales will have; [145706]

(2) what assessment he has made of how the European Investment Services Directive and the end of execution-only sales will affect *(a)* banks, *(b)* internet companies, *(c)* consumers and *(d)* the City of London. [145709]

Ruth Kelly: The Government were disappointed with the position adopted by the European Council of Ministers on the proposed new Investment Services Directive. We believe that in several areas the Council text misses opportunities to create a competitive, integrated European financial market and instead will harm competition.

An area of particular concern for the Government during negotiations was the treatment of "execution-only" business in the Directive. We believe that it is important to ensure that execution-only business is not compromised by unnecessary regulation. Such business can provide low-cost access to share trading, for example, for a wider range of investors.

During negotiations, the Government successfully ensured that execution-only business will be exempt from full "suitability testing" obligations.

The Government will work hard with the Financial Services Authority to ensure that the provision relating to execution-only business is not implemented in the UK in a way which restricts normal marketing activity or direct offer promotions.

The Investment Services Directive is one of the topics discussed when Treasury Ministers meet members of the financial services industry.

At official level, the Treasury has frequent contact with representatives of financial services businesses, trade associations and consumer groups. Recent contacts have involved discussions of the potential impact of the Directive on activities including on execution-only sales of financial instruments.

Financial Education

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax incentives are available to companies providing free financial education for *(a)* children and *(b)* adults; and how these fit into the Government's policy to reduce financial illiteracy. [145710]

Ruth Kelly: There are no specific tax incentives in place aimed at encouraging companies to provide free financial education to children or adults.

Improving basic financial literacy is a key element of the Government's strategy to reduce social and financial exclusion, while tackling over-indebtedness, and promoting saving. We are doing this across government to help people identify and meet their financial needs. Key initiatives include:

the Saving Gateway, a transparent savings account with tailored financial advice and education;

a framework for Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) that provides for personal finance education to be taught throughout Key Stages 1 to 4 of the school curriculum; and

pension reforms that will help people make better informed choices about their retirement.

We also work closely with the Financial Services Authority, which has rightly taken the lead in developing a national strategy for financial capability.

Islamic Home Finance Initiatives

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what regulation there is to protect Muslims from mis-selling of housing finance that complies with Sharia law. [145720]

Ruth Kelly: I understand that some Islamic home finance arrangements may already fall within the definition of a regulated mortgage contract under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Regulated Activities) Order 2001 (SI/2001 No. 544) and would therefore be covered by the regime that the Financial Services Authority (FSA) will be implementing from 31 October 2004.

However, as explained in paragraph 36 of the consultation document 'Regulating home reversion plans', we are seeking information on arrangements that are not reversion plans but which might nevertheless be caught by any legislative definition of a reversion plan if we decide to regulate home reversion plans. These might include alternative property financing arrangements that may be used by banks to provide housing finance which complies with Sharia law.

Gershon Review

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether savings expected from implementation of the findings of the Gershon Review have been taken into account in the public expenditure totals for future years published in the pre-Budget report 2003. [145945]

Mr. Boateng: Paragraph B27 of the pre-Budget report sets out the assumptions on which the fiscal projections, including public expenditure projections, are based.

National Statistics

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many deaths from *(a)* chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and *(b)* lung cancer were recorded in each year since 1996, broken down by age; and how many deaths per 100,000 population there were in each case. [146210]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from John Pullinger to Mr. Paul Burstow, dated 7 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question asking how many deaths from *(a)* chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and *(b)* lung cancer were recorded in each year since 1996, broken down by age; and how many deaths per 100,000 population there were in each case. I am replying in his absence. (146210)

All the figures requested can be found in the annual series, published by ONS, Mortality Statistics: Cause. Series DH2. Copies of these publications are available from the House of Commons Library. This publication is also available on the internet at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ST ATBASE/Product. asp?vlnk = 618

The most recent volume in the series, DH2 No. 29, contains the latest available data, for 2002. Table 5 of this publication shows death rates for 1996 to 2002 for lung cancer (1CD-10 C33-C34; 1CD-9 162) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (1CD-10 J40-J44; ICD-9 490–492, 496). The number of deaths by sex and age can be found in Table 2 of each annual volume.

Home Reversion Products

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what support he has received from consumer organisations for his plan for the Financial Services Authority to require a valuation of properties used as collateral for home reversion plans; [145721]

(2) if he will draw up tables of guidance on the amount of money people should expect when taking out home reversion products; and if he will discuss this with *(a)* consumer groups, *(b)* mortgage companies and *(c)* financial advisers. [145722]

Ruth Kelly: The Government are carrying out an open consultation on whether the Financial Services Authority (FSA) should regulate home reversion plans. We published a consultation paper 'Regulating home reversion plans' on 11 November and responses are due to be returned by 13 February 2004.

The issue of property valuation and pricing of reversion plans is considered in paragraphs 21 to 23 of the consultation document. If it is decided that the Financial Services Authority (FSA) should regulate home reversion plans, the details of the regime will be decided by the FSA on the basis of a separate consultation and cost/benefit analysis.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list information technology contracts in his Department with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146200]

Mr. Boateng: HM Treasury has never had an information technology contract above £20 million.

HM Customs and Excise has let two IT Contracts in excess of £20 million in the past 10 years. An outsourcing contract was signed on 25 August 1999 with Fujitsu C&E Services Ltd., for the provision of IT and telephony infrastructure services. Because this was a services contract, there was no debugging. The Transfer of Undertaking was achieved to target without any overrun. A second contract was awarded to BT/ Syntegra in 1989 for the provision of the CHIEF (Customs Handling of Import and Export freight) service. The contract was extended to January 2007 to recognise new strategic business requirements and allow sufficient time for the CIPR (Customs Information Processing Requirement) procurement process. To date, there have been no cost overruns.

The Inland Revenue has three IT contracts whose budgets exceed £20 million. First, it has a strategic contract with EDS, which commenced on 1 July 1994. This contract covers all IT services for Inland Revenue systems, their enhancement, day to day maintenance and new systems development. It is not a fixed price contract. Major systems are delivered within their own individual internal budgets, and the contract with EDS has supported the development and delivery of these systems since 1994.

The contract was extended to January 2007 to recognise new strategic business requirements and allow sufficient time for the CIPR (Customs Information Processing Requirement) procurement process. To date, there have been no cost overruns. The Inland Revenue has three IT contracts whose budgets exceed £20 million. First, it has a strategic contract with EDS, which commenced on 1 July 1994. This contract covers all IT services for Inland Revenue systems, their enhancement, day to day maintenance and new systems development. It is not a fixed price contract. Major systems are delivered within their own individual internal budgets, and the contract with EDS has supported the development and delivery of these systems since 1994.

In 1998 the Inland Revenue inherited a contract from the Department of Social Security for the provision of the NIRS2 Services run by Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting). The system went live in July 1998 and has been stable since April 2000. The NIRS2 service was provided under a PFI contract which has since been adjusted to allow for the unprecedented level of change required of the system by new legislation. There were some well documented delays in introducing the NIRS system, involving extra development costs, paid for by Andersen Consulting. The Inland Revenue has also incurred business recovery costs, enabling the introduction of more modern and automated business processes.

The E-IROS contract was awarded to Computacenter in June 2000 for the provision of desktop hardware, software and related services. This is not a fixed price

contract and consequently the value of the contract depends on the annual demand for desktop services. It has, however, exceeded £20 million in each of the last four years.

Economic Activity (Leeds, North-West)

Mr. Best: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the rate of economic activity was in the Leeds North-West constituency in *(a)* 1997 and *(b)* 2002–03. [146204]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Mr. Harold Best, dated 7 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about economic activity rates. I am replying in his absence. (146204)

The attached table shows the working age economic activity rates for the Leeds North West constituency in successive twelve month periods ending from February 1998 to February 2002. These estimates are from the annual local area Labour Force Survey (LFS). Comparable information for the twelve month period ending February 2003 is not yet available. Working age is defined as ages 16–64 for men and 16–59 for women.

The series of annual activity rates from 1997/98 to 2000/01 is fairly stable, and the sharp fall in the estimate for 2001/02 may have arisen partly from sampling variability. As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to this source of variation.

Working age[1] economic activity rates[2] in the Leeds North West constituency

March to February	*Percentage*
1997–98	83.5
1998–99	79.9
1999–2000	82.0
2000–01	84.0
2001–02	73.9

[1] Men aged 16–64 and women aged 16–59
[2] Economically active as a percentage of the working age population
Note:
These Labour Force Survey estimates have not been interim-adjusted to reflect the 2001 Census results
Source:
ONS Labour Force Survey

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how often he has met on a one-to-one basis senior representatives from *(a)* major industrial companies and *(b)* oil and gas companies. [145653]

John Healey: Ministers and civil servants have meetings with a wide range of organisations and individuals as part of the process of policy development and analysis. As with previous Administrations, it is not this Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings. All such contacts are conducted in accordance with the Ministerial Code, the Civil Service Code and Guidance for Civil Servants: Contact with Lobbyists.

Pre-Budget Report 2003

Mr. Flight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much of the sum spent on policy, funding and regulation activity which impacts on the private sector, referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003, was spent on each category; and if he will make a statement; [145923]

(2) how the £9 billion referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003 is broken down between *(a)* policy, *(b)* funding and *(c)* regulation activity; [145942]

(3) how much of the annual spend on hospitals, schools and police forces referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003 is spent on each category; [145952]

(4) what assessment he has made of the cost to the private sector of the *(a)* policy, *(b)* funding and *(c)* regulation activity which impacts on the private sector as referred to in paragraph 6.47 of the pre-Budget report 2003; and if he will make a statement; [145954]

(5) how the £11 billion of payments for transactional services referred to in paragraph 6.46 of the pre-Budget report 2003 is composed by *(a)* sector, *(b)* benefits, *(c)* tax collection, *(d)* tax credits and *(e)* other services. [146019]

Mr. Boateng: These are working estimates and a breakdown is therefore not available for publication.

Public Sector Pay

Adam Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account public sector pay review bodies take of rates of *(a)* staff turnover and *(b)* vacancies in assessing benefit packages offered by public sector bodies in different regions and localities. [146706]

Mr. Boateng: Pay Review Bodies are independent bodies. They weigh the evidence they receive from interested parties and their own independent research to formulate recommendations on the remuneration of their remit groups. The Terms of Reference for each Review Body differ and are available from the Office of Manpower Economics, the secretariat to the Review Bodies.

Stamp Duty

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* homebuyers and *(b)* businesses in Leyton have benefited from the exemption from stamp duty on premises purchased in disadvantaged areas since the exemption was introduced; and if he will make a statement. [146365]

Ruth Kelly: Between the introduction of the exemption at the end of November 2001 and the end of October 2003, there were 133 residential transactions and two commercial transactions recorded as taking place in the ward of Leyton which benefited from the exemption. In the same period there were 398 residential transactions and nine commercial transactions recorded as taking place in all exempt wards in the Leyton and Wanstead parliamentary constituency.

TRANSPORT

Air Transport

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with *(a)* BAA and

(b) major airlines on the proposals which will form the basis of the forthcoming consultation on a new night noise regime at (i) Heathrow, (ii) Gatwick and (iii) Stansted. [145637]

Mr. Darling: As yet, no discussions have been held with any interested parties to assist in drawing up proposals for the next consultation on a new night restrictions regime for Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted. We expect the consultation to commence in the first half of this year.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether local authority grant financing will be available to local authorities who own airports in the South East to develop those airports. [145893]

Mr. McNulty: Under the new prudential capital finance system, which comes into force on 1 April 2004, a small amount of local authority airport investment will attract revenue support grant. In allocating this investment approval, the Department will give priority to health, safety, security and environmental projects required by the regulatory authorities. Local authorities will be free to make their own decisions on additional borrowing for airport development purposes, providing they can afford it. A further option would be to seek a private sector partner.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will use his statutory powers to control the *(a)* time and *(b)* volume of night flights in and out of East Midlands Airport. [145957]

Dr. Howells: The Government consider that existing measures to control noise from night flight operations at East Midlands Airport are adequate. Their policy towards night noise and East Midlands Airport is set out in the Government's White Paper, "The Future of Air Transport", chapters 3 and 9 respectively.

Fuel Efficiency (Road Transport)

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions he estimates have been saved as a result of the liquid petroleum gas duty rebate; and at what cost to public funds. [145734]

Mr. Jamieson: The Department estimates that favourable duty rates for LPG since 1996 have saved around 343.3 thousand tonnes of carbon dioxide at a cost of around £160.7 million in terms of duty forgone. This estimate assumes that all LPG has replaced petrol and not diesel.

Government Consultation Paper

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses were received to the consultation paper, "On the Move: By Foot"; and when the Government will arrive at their conclusions. [145544]

Mr. Jamieson: We received 130 responses. We aim to publish an action plan document in the spring.

New Roads and Street Works Act

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many convictions there have been in each of the last five years for contraventions of *(a)* section 51, *(b)* section 56, *(c)* section 58, *(d)* section 60, *(e)* section 66, *(f)* section 67 and *(g)* section 71 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991; and what the (i) maximum and (ii) average fines were imposed for each category of offence. [145541]

Mr. Jamieson: Comprehensive information is not held centrally on the number of offences or level of fines. Based on information collected by local authorities, the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Traffic Management Bill showed that the number of prosecutions under the 1991 Act has been small, less than 200 over the 10 years since the Act came into force, and that the average fine has been less than half the maximum permitted, the latter being £1,000 for all the categories listed.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr. Blunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths in road traffic accidents involved *(a)* the use of hand held mobile phones and *(b)* drivers smoking in (i) 2000, (ii) 2001 and (iii) 2002. [143836]

Mr. Jamieson: Research has shown that using a mobile phone while driving is distracting and drivers are four times more likely to have an accident if they do so. While many other activities may also be distracting, we are not aware of a similar risk from the effects of smoking while driving.

Traffic Management Bill

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the minimum qualifications which will be required by persons seeking appointment as traffic officers under the Traffic Management Bill. [145536]

Mr. Jamieson: The Highways Agency is placing significant importance on appointing the right people to traffic officer posts. Persons applying for a position as a traffic officer will be required to have two years of relevant experience or one year of relevant experience with a minimum of 5 O Levels/GCSEs at grade C or above.

Applications will also be considered against a set of stringent competencies, aptitudes and essential criteria. A copy of the competences required has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by police authority the number of police officers that will be displaced as a result of the provisions of the Traffic Management Bill, and the proposed timescale for such displacement. [145542]

Mr. Jamieson: Once implemented, the provisions within the Traffic Management Bill will free up police time from some traffic management duties. While the police will still patrol the network, they will be able to spend more time and resources dealing with vehicle, road and other crime including detection and enforcement against bad driving, vehicle theft and licensing offences.

The plans for Highways Agency Traffic Officers will free up the equivalent of more than 500 police officers, as they are phased in over a period of three years. The information is not broken down by police authority. The effect of civil enforcement of further traffic offences by local authorities will depend on the take up of the new powers and the level of current enforcement activity in respect of those offences by the police. The manner in which any resources released are re-deployed will be a matter for the police.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many convictions there have been in each of the last five years for offences under section 36 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 for failing to comply with the indication given by a traffic sign; and how many convictions there were in respect of traffic signs that would be subject to civil enforcement under the Traffic Management Bill. [145545]

Mr. Jamieson: Supplementary tables to annual Home Office Statistical Bulletins on offences relating to motor vehicles give numbers by offence type that were the subject of police action in England and Wales. The number of fixed penalty notices and convictions for "neglect of traffic directions", the offence type which includes failing to comply with the indication given by a traffic sign, in the last five years for which statistics have been published were as follows:

	Fixed penalty notices	*Magistrates court findings of guilt*	*Crown court findings of guilt*
2001	162,885	29,034	42
2000	168,234	30,844	43
1999	175,793	30,891	32
1998	189,921	31,946	53
1997	191,923	33,144	63

A detailed breakdown of these numbers by the types of traffic signs contravened is not held centrally, but the figures include fixed penalties and prosecutions for traffic light offences detected by cameras. They accounted for a quarter of the fixed penalties and convictions for neglect of traffic directions over the five years. Traffic light offences will not be subject to civil enforcement under the powers contained in the Traffic Management Bill.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proportion of police time in 2002–03 expended on traffic duty on motorways and trunk roads is represented by 550 full-time equivalent police officers; [145547]

(2) if he will give the data underlying the statement in the regulatory impact assessment for the Traffic Management Bill that the equivalent of 550 full-time police officers will be released as a result of creating traffic officers, and the number of police officers to be released by each police authority. [145549]

Mr. Jamieson: The Highways Agency and Association of Chief Police Officers "Roles and Responsibilities Report" identified plans that could free up the equivalent of about 540 full-time equivalent police officers. Based on figures from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary of 6,540 designated roads police in 2001–02, the report estimated that a transfer of non-core police activities to the Highways Agency enabled approximately 8½ per cent. of police time to work on other key tasks. Resources will be freed up over a period of about three years as Highways Agency Traffic Officers are phased in across all motorways and some key trunk roads.

Calculations for the number of police officers to be released by each police force were made at a national level and have not been translated into resources for individual police authorities. The manner in which resources are redeployed is a matter for the police and will depend on, among other things, the current resources available and policing priorities. This does not mean that police will stop patrolling the network, instead they will be able to spend more time dealing with vehicle, road and other crime.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many regional control centres will be established under the Traffic Management Bill; what their annual cost will be; and how many new positions will be created. [145823]

Mr. Jamieson: There will be seven regional control centres with an annual cost of about £15 million. It is currently envisaged that the number of new posts created will be about 300.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the estimated cost is of each additional traffic manager as proposed in the Traffic Management Bill. [145824]

Mr. Jamieson: While the Traffic Management Bill proposes that each local traffic authority will be required to appoint a traffic manager, it is for each authority to decide who should carry out the role and precisely what duties they should have. The traffic manager could be an existing member of staff and/or could have other duties as well, so there could be no increase in costs. Taking the Bill measures as a whole, the Government consider that, on average, there should be no net cost to authorities.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Speaker's Committee

Mr. Blunt: To ask the hon. Member for Gosport, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission when the Speaker's Committee last made a report to the House on the exercise by it of its functions. [146485]

Mr. Viggers: The Speaker's Committee has a statutory obligation to make a report to the House on the exercise by it of its functions at least once in each year. Its most recent report, the First Report, 2003, was laid before the House and published on 18 December 2003 as House of Commons Paper 140. Copies have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Badgers

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Government plans to remove the protected status from badgers. [142462]

Mr. Bradshaw: No.

Climate Change

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what position the Government took at the recent climate change meeting in Italy in respect of GM trees. [145135]

Mr. Morley: The UK's position at the recent negotiations on the use of sinks (afforestation and reforestation projects) in the Clean Development Mechanism at the Conference of the Parties negotiations held in Milan was that any proposal to use GMO trees should be consistent with the objective and provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, under the Convention on Biological Diversity. This includes a risk assessment and an advanced informed agreement procedure for GMOs intended for intentional introduction into the environment (such as seeds for planting). This was the position agreed by consensus.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Wills: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the cost per person per week of the Common Agricultural Policy in the United Kingdom in the most recent year for which figures are available. [144460]

Mr. Bradshaw: The consumer cost of the CAP can be estimated by examining the difference between UK and world prices for agricultural food products. The notional taxpayer contribution to CAP expenditure can also be estimated though, in practice, UK taxpayers contribute to the whole EU budget rather than to specific components. Our provisional estimates for 2002 show an average cost of the CAP per person of just over £2 per week.

Correspondence

Alistair Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will make a substantive reply to the letter from the hon. Member for North-East Bedfordshire of 23 October, and his fax of 16 November to the hon. Member for Scunthorpe in relation to his constituent Mr. Ross Donovan. [143883]

Mr. Morley: I responded to the hon. Member in full on 1 January 2004.

Environmental Sustainability

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs where the UK ranks in the Environmental Sustainability Index; and if she will list the rankings of other EU countries. [145146]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The UK ranks 91st internationally in the 2002 Environmental Sustainability Index compiled by the Global Leaders of Tomorrow Task Force of the World Economic Forum in association with the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and Columbia University. The rankings of other EU member states are shown in the following table. However, the UK and other countries believe this index is profoundly flawed and therefore potentially misleading, for the following reasons. It is an aggregated indicator which aims to weight together many components into a single overall measure of 'environmental Sustainability', an approach which as yet is not scientifically robust. The choice of components, and the way in which they are weighted together, is largely subjective. A different choice of components or weights would give different results, amply illustrated by the fact that the previous edition of this index, based on a different selection of components, placed the UK 16th.

Furthermore, there are still many areas where data are not sufficiently comparable between countries, or are simply not available. The values of many of the variables used to compile this index are imputed. It should also be noted that the variables used in this index tend to measure circumstances at a single point in time rather than trends or changes, therefore to the extent the index measures anything at all, it measures the environmental situation which a country faces rather than its progress or performance in improving environmental sustainability.

2002 ESI rankings by country

Rank	*Country*	*ESI*
1	Finland	73.9
3	Sweden	72.6
7	Austria	64.2
28	Portugal	57.1
31	Denmark	56.2
33	France	55.5
34	Netherlands	55.4
37	Ireland	54.8
44	Spain	54.1
50	Germany	52.5
60	Greece	50.9
84	Italy	47.2
91	United Kingdom	46.1
125	Belgium	39.1

Note:
Luxemburg is not ranked
Source:
Global Leaders of Tomorrow Task Force of the World Economic Forum in association with Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and Columbia University

Grey Squirrels

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects to receive the report from the Forestry Commission England on the control of grey squirrels. [144116]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* The Forestry Commission has not been asked to prepare a report on the control of grey squirrels. They are however currently engaged in the preparation of a policy statement on this subject. This is one of the commitments

made in the response to the recommendations contained in the "Sustaining England's Woodlands" review. There is no firm timetable for the presentation of the statement.

Identity Cards

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the implications of the introduction of compulsory identity cards for her Department. [143355]

Alun Michael: The introduction of compulsory identity cards is a long-term undertaking on which inter-departmental discussions are led by the Home Office. This Department has an interest in tackling illegal working at an acceptable compliance cost to business (for example, in the agriculture and fresh produce sectors) and in providing a means to encourage legal routes of migration to the UK.

Katherine Bryan

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether it was known by Ministers in her Department that Katherine Bryan had applied for the post of Chief Executive of Water Services at the Northern Ireland Department for Regional Development at the time when she was appointed to chair the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM); on what date she tendered her resignation as CoRWM chair; what considerations was given to the other shortlisted candidates for the Chair of CoRWM in the appointment of her replacement; and who has been chosen as a replacement for Katherine Bryan on the Committee. [143513]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 10 December 2003]:* No. Ministers knew of Mrs. Bryan's intention to resign on 26 November 2003. With the agreement of the Environment Ministers for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and after consultation with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, an announcement was made on 5 December that Gordon MacKerron, an existing member of CoRWM, was to be appointed as the new Chair. Among those candidates originally interviewed for the post of Chair, he was considered the most suitable replacement for Mrs. Bryan. No other appointment to CoRWM has been made.

Pesticides

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what *(a)* sources and *(b)* methodology was used to calculate (i) buffer zone sizes, (ii) grassland area affected and (iii) arable area affected in the Pesticides Safety Directorate discussion paper proposals for the Introduction of No-Spray Buffer Zones Around Residential Properties in England and Wales. [145984]

Alun Michael: The consultation document included four possible buffer zone sizes. These were 6 metres (reflecting a quarter section of a typical spray boom), 1.0 metres (the minimum set-aside width); 100 metres; and 300 metres.

For the purpose of the consultation comparisons of the economic effects of introducing these various sizes of buffer zones were made. Information was sought from the Rural Development Service's Geographic Information Unit. The Unit estimated the area of both arable and improved grassland adjacent to built-up areas in five selected areas. This was done utilising the Land Cover Map 2000 which is derived from the analysis of Earth observational satellite imagery. The resulting data was then extrapolated to provide a total figure for England and Wales.

It was always acknowledged that these figures were illustrative, and one of the purposes of going to consultation was to see if these estimates could be refined further.

A decision is yet to be made of what size, if any, buffer zone will be introduced. Further work is being carried out to determine more accurately the areas affected.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from how many of the organisations and individuals invited by the Pesticide Safety Directorate to the stakeholder meeting on 13 October about the consultation on plans for greater access to information about crop spraying written responses were received *(a)* by the official deadline and *(b)* after the deadline. [146018]

Alun Michael: The meeting on 13 October was held with rural residents' interest groups to discuss the issues raised by the informal consultation exercise on public access to information on pesticide use and to identify how practical measures might be introduced.

Those who attended were invited because it was felt they would be in a position to address the practical issues raised, rather than solely on the basis of having submitted a written response to the informal consultation.

Of the 33 representative organisations and individuals who were invited, five attended, 10 submitted written responses to the informal consultation by the official deadline; the remaining 23 did not submit a response. The official deadline was extended from 31 August to 30 September to take account of the summer holiday period.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

CAFCASS

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for what reason there are no plans to publish Sir Clive Booth's report on CAFCASS. [144972]

Margaret Hodge: There are no plans to publish Professor Sir Clive Booth's review as it contains confidential information about individual Board members.

The central recommendation of Professor Sir Clive Booth's review was to make a fresh start with the Board. Ministers accepted his proposal that all Board members should be asked to submit their resignations.

Children's Minister

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which quangos come under the remit of the Children's Minister; and how they are accountable. [145025]

Margaret Hodge: I am responsible for the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy. The Lord Chancellor is currently the Minister responsible for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). However, Ministerial responsibility for CAFCASS will transfer to me in this Year. Baroness Ashton of Upholland is Minister responsible for the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, although I have a working interest in the Tribunal's operation.

Responsibility for the day-to-day work of these Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) rests with their Executive Team and Board or President, although Ministers provide the overall strategic direction. Ministers appoint NDPBs' Board members or Presidents, and are answerable to Parliament for the NDPBs' stewardship of public funds; for their overall economy, effectiveness and efficiency; and for the general manner in which they carry out their remit.

School and College League Performance Tables

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans he has to show A levels and vocational course qualifications separately in college league tables; and if he will make a statement. [146357]

Mr. Miliband: We have no plans to show A levels and vocational course qualifications separately in performance tables. The school and college performance tables will show combined results for General (GCE) and/or Vocational (VCE) A levels, Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualifications and key skills at level 3. This practice recognises the qualifications as equal in worth and does not undermine the achievements in any particular qualification in any way. We are, though, currently consulting on future measures of success which will take account of the diverse curriculum offer in post 16 learning. "Measuring success in the Learning and Skills Sector" can be found at www.successforall.gov.uk. Following that consultation we will consider whether any changes in presentation should be introduced in future years' tables.

Commonwealth Universities

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent representations he has received concerning the possibility of a common entrance qualification for Commonwealth universities; and if he will make a statement. [145087]

Alan Johnson: I have received no representations on this subject. Policies on admissions decisions for Commonwealth Universities are for their respective Governments.

Directorate Staff

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 833W, on Directorate Staff, if he will make a statement on the change in staff numbers in the *(a)* schools and *(b)* Lifelong Learning Directorates in 2003; and to which directorates the staff employed within the Youth Directorate have been transferred. [145971]

Mr. Charles Clarke *[holding answer 6 January2003]:* Following the Machinery of Government changed in June 2003 the DfES assumed lead responsibility in Whitehall for policy on children and the family. As a result of the changes, around 120 staff from the Home Office, the Department of Health and the Department for Constitutional Affairs, who were engaged in a range of work on children and family issues, transferred to DfES. To support its enhanced role, the Department created a new Directorate: Children, Young People and Families, drawing together all those who were employed in these areas to improve the coordination of policy development and service delivery. Around 600 staff in Schools Directorate working on Sure Start and children's issues were moved to the new Directorate, accounting for the significant change in staff numbers in Schools Directorate during the latter part of 2003.

The increase in staff numbers in Lifelong Learning Directorate during the second half of 2003 resulted from the transfer of 200 staff from the former Youth Directorate. The majority of the remaining staff in Youth Directorate transferred to the Children, Young People and Families Directorate, while a small number moved to Strategy and Communications Directorate.

Earned Autonomy Scheme

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent assessment he has made of the effects of introducing an earned autonomy scheme, as provided for in the Education Act 2002; and if he will make a statement. [146185]

Mr. Miliband: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Hoban) on 3 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 92W.

Excellence in Cities Programme

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 17 December 2003, ref.143373, for what reason he has not provided the information on the Excellence in Cities programme in the form requested. [145429]

Mr. Charles Clarke: We did not provide the reply in the same format as the answers relating to Leadership Incentive Grant, Education Action Zones and Excellence Clusters because the funds that are allocated to Excellence in Cities (EiC) authorities are intended for all the schools in the authority. Funds provided for the other named programmes are targeted resources for individual schools as identified by my Department and local education authorities. However, we have now provided a table in the required format, listing the total schools in each authority. It is not possible to provide a meaningful breakdown of primary and secondary schools, as we do not know exactly where individual authorities will target their EiC funds.

Standards fund 2003–04

LEA number	LEA	Allocation (£)	Number of schools
201	City of London	—	—
202	Camden	298,639	224
203	Greenwich	788,775	234
204	Hackney	550,040	274
205	Hammersmith	250,500	188
206	Islington	841,633	231
207	Kensington and Chelsea	—	—
208	Lambeth	255,721	283
209	Lewisham	274,579	244
210	Southwark	560,000	263
211	Tower Hamlets	811,652	194
212	Wandsworth	250,000	326
213	Westminster	—	—
301	Barking	631,427	134
302	Barnet	—	—
303	Bexley	—	—
304	Brent	312,710	246
305	Bromley	—	—
306	Croydon	—	—
307	Ealing	256,510	297
308	Enfield	319,203	250
309	Haringey	250,000	231
310	Harrow	—	—
311	Havering	—	—
312	Hillingdon	—	—
313	Hounslow	290,503	179
314	Kingston upon Thames	—	—
315	Merton	—	—
316	Newham	250,000	213
317	Redbridge	—	—
318	Richmond upon Thames	—	—
319	Sutton	—	—
320	Waltham Forest	602,958	207
330	Birmingham	1,452,020	967
331	Coventry	—	—
332	Dudley	—	—
333	Sandwell	250,000	229
334	Solihull	—	—
335	Walsall	—	—
336	Wolverhampton	295,785	235
340	Knowsley	270,833	129
341	Liverpool	1,092,361	558
342	St Helens	599,139	175
343	Sefton	815,628	250
344	Wirral	584,352	316
350	Bolton	—	—
351	Bury	—	—
352	Manchester	843,879	451
353	Oldham	250,000	243
354	Rochdale	547,987	243
355	Salford	867,664	259
356	Stockport	—	—
357	Tameside	—	—
358	Trafford	—	—
359	Wigan	—	—
370	Barnsley	258,441	208
371	Doncaster	250,000	267
372	Rotherham	837,876	236
373	Sheffield	827,240	494
380	Bradford	611,489	489
381	Calderdale	—	—
382	Kirklees	—	—
383	Leeds	1,147,048	823
384	Wakefield	—	—
390	Gateshead	864,819	200
391	Newcastle upon Tyne	550,000	265
392	North Tyneside	571,682	159
393	South Tyneside	539,954	124
394	Sunderland	854,018	225
420	Isles of Scilly	—	—
800	Bath and NE Somerset	—	—
801	City of Bristol	590,944	374
802	North Somerset	—	—
803	South Gloucestershire	—	—
805	Hartlepool	250,000	61
806	Middlesbrough	595,259	111
807	Redcar and Cleveland	279,036	91
808	Stockton-on-Tees	559,627	127
810	Kingston-upon-Hull	561,136	200
811	East Riding of Yorkshire	—	—
812	North East Lincolnshire	—	—
813	North Lincolnshire	—	—
815	North Yorkshire	—	—
816	York	—	—

Standards fund 2003–04

LEA number	LEA	Allocation (£)	Number of schools
820	Bedfordshire	—	—
821	Luton	250,000	165
825	Buckinghamshire	—	—
826	Milton Keynes	—	—
830	Derbyshire	—	—
831	Derby	—	—
835	Dorset	—	—
836	Poole	—	—
837	Bournemouth	—	—
840	Durham	—	—
841	Darlington	—	—
845	East Sussex	—	—
846	Brighton & Hove	—	—
850	Hampshire	—	—
851	Portsmouth	—	—
852	Southampton	—	—
855	Leicestershire	—	—
856	Leicester	500,000	271
857	Rutland	—	—
860	Staffordshire	—	—
861	Stoke-on-Trent	583,255	214
865	Wiltshire	—	—
866	Swindon	—	—
867	Bracknell Forest	—	—
868	Windsor and Maidenhead	—	—
869	West Berkshire	—	—
870	Reading	—	—
871	Slough	—	—
872	Wokingham	—	—
873	Cambridgeshire	—	—
874	Peterborough	—	—
875	Cheshire	—	—
876	Halton	554,366	130
877	Warrington	—	—
878	Devon	—	—
879	Plymouth	—	—
880	Torbay	—	—
881	Essex	—	—
882	Southend-on-Sea	—	—
883	Thurrock	—	—
884	Herefordshire	—	—
885	Worcestershire	—	—
886	Kent	—	—
887	Medway Towns	—	—
888	Lancashire	—	—
889	Blackburn with Darwen	297,727	125
890	Blackpool	253,384	119
891	Nottinghamshire	—	—
892	Nottingham City	608,555	252
893	Shropshire	—	—
894	Telford and Wrekin	—	—
908	Cornwall	—	—
909	Cumbria	—	—
916	Gloucestershire	—	—
919	Hertfordshire	—	—
921	Isle of Wight	—	—
925	Lincolnshire	—	—
926	Norfolk	—	—
928	Northamptonshire	—	—
929	Northumberland	—	—
931	Oxfordshire	—	—
933	Somerset	—	—
935	Suffolk	—	—
936	Surrey	—	—
937	Warrington	—	—
938	West Sussex	—	—
—	Total	28,860,350	14,003

Free School Meals

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many and what proportion of children received free school meals in each of the last five years; and what proportion of children were entitled to free school meals in each of the last five years. [146348]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is given in the tables.

Position in January each year—England

	Day Pupils[2,3]				
	1999	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*[3]
Maintained nursery and primary schools[1] *school meal arrangements*					
Number on roll	4,507,663	4,481,677	4,451,224	4,405,639	4,350,260
Number of pupils taking free school meals[4]	690,321	671,486	631,638	616,625	604,911
Percentage of pupil staking free school meals	15.3	15.0	14.2	14.0	13.9
Number of pupils known to be eligible for free meals[5]	853,020	821,521	784,976	754,511	731,611
Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free meals	18.9	18.3	17.6	17.1	16.8
Maintained secondary schools1: school meal arrangements					
Number on roll	3,118,277	3,177,998	3,226,973	3,260,931	3,308,492
Number of pupils taking free school meals[4]	367,795	368,303	353,469	354,256	349,777
Percentage of pupil staking free school meals	11.8	11.6	11.0	10.9	10.6
Number of pupils known to be eligible for free meals	527,339	523,630	509,676	486,353	478,915
Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free meals[5]	16.9	16.5	15.8	14.9	14.5

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.
[2] Day pupils includes all full-time and part-time pupils who are solely or dually registered, excluding boarding pupils. See[3] for 2003.
[3] In 2003 boarding pupils are included.
[4] Number of pupils taking a free school meal on the day of the Census in January.
[5] Prior to 2001 figures relate to the number of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal. From 2001 this definition was expanded to include only pupils who were known to be eligible for and claiming a free school meal.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census

Further and Higher Education

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether it is his intention to increase the overall total number of students aged 18 to 30 who study for courses in *(a)* higher education and *(b)* further education institutions by 2010. [144284]

Alan Johnson: The White Paper: The Future of Higher Education was published in January 2003. In this, the Government set out plans to increase participation in higher education towards 50 per cent. of those aged 18 to 30 by 2010.Although there are no numerical targets for expansion of student numbers in further education, funding will increase by £1.2 billion between 2002–03 and 2005–06, a 19 per cent. real terms increase. This will help to support increased participation in further education.

Mr. Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what research his Department has carried out on the ability of *(a)* individual learners and *(b)* employers to pay increased fees for further education courses. [146233]

Alan Johnson: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his earlier question, 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 835W, refers.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations he has received from Scottish universities in respect of the proposed Higher Education Bill. [145681]

Alan Johnson: I have received representations from a wide range of sources since the White Paper was published. My Department has had discussions regarding the proposals in the Higher Education Bill with Universities UK which represents institutions across the UK.

School Finance

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the level of *(a)* revenue funding and *(b)* school-based expenditure per school pupil was in each of the last five years, broken down by (i) capital expenditure, (ii) expenditure on special schools and (iii) central administration and support services. [141702]

Mr. Miliband: The bulk of capital funding is now allocated by formula to schools and local authorities, and investment decisions are made locally in the context of the Asset Management Plan. In the interests of reducing the bureaucratic burden, the Department does not collect data for capital expenditure from schools or authorities. The information requested on recurrent funding is contained in the following tables:

(a) Total funding per pupil aged 3–19

England	£
1997–98	2,510
1998–99	2,620
1999–2000	2,800
2000–01	3,060
2001–02	3,280
2002–03	3,490
2003–04	3,690

Notes:
1. Figures reflect education SSA/EFS settlement (all sub-blocks). Total funding also includes all revenue grants in DfES departmental Expenditure Limits relevant to EPS pupils aged 3–19.
2. Figures exclude EMAs and grants not allocated at LEA level and the pensions transfer to EPS and LSC for 2003–04.
3. The pupil numbers used are those underlying the SSA/EFS settlement calculations plus PLASC 3 year olds maintained pupils, estimated 3–4 year olds funded through state support in maintained and other educational institutions where these are not included in the SSA pupil numbers.
4. 2003–04 and 2002–03 figures are provisional estimates as some grants have not yet been finalised/audited.
5. Cash terms figures used are rounded to the nearest 10 so may not sum.

(b) School based expenditure per pupil

	NIE	Pupils	NIE per pupil
(ii) Expenditure on special schools[1]			
1997–98	882,132,000	91,870	9,602
1998–99	910,015,000	91,837	9,909
1999–2000	986,451,471	90,980	10,843
2000–01	1,071,331,814	90,055	11,896
2001–02	1,151,146,785	89,083	12,922
(iii) Central administration and support services[2]			
1997–98	1,206,130,000	7,473,985	161
1998–99	1,330,466,000	7,526,071	177
1999–2000	1,302,341,279	7,565,844	172
2000–01	1,408,239,708	7,592,711	185
2001–02	1,444,640,500	7,595,137	190

[1] Net institutional expenditure includes all school-recurrent funding, including teaching staff and non-teaching staff salaries, school premises costs, equipment and supplies, and unspent balances held by schools at the year end. Excludes spending on central administration and support services such as transport and school meals as well as capital expenditure.

[2] For 1997–98 and 1998–99 management and support expenditure comprises of spending on management and administration, inspection and advisory services, other education support services and school catering services. For 1999–2000, 2000–01 and 2001–02 management and support expenditure comprises of statutory/regulatory duties and other support services.

Notes:

1. Figures are in cash terms as reported by the LEA.
2. The expenditure data for 1997–98 and 1998–99 is drawn from the annual 'RO1' spending returns which local authorities submitted to the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions. From 1999–2000 onwards, data is taken from local education authorities' Section 52 Outturn Statements submitted to the DfES. The pupil data are drawn from the DfES Annual Schools' Census.

Language Study

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 958W, on language study, what measures he is taking to reverse the decline in the number of schools offering Latin at *(a)* GCSE and *(b)* A-level. [146186]

Mr. Miliband: It is for individual schools and colleges to decide which subjects they are to provide, aside from those in the National Curriculum. From October 2003, we have expanded the Specialist School programme to include Specialist Humanities Colleges, through which schools may focus on Latin alongside other humanities subjects. We have introduced an Advanced Extension Award in Latin which has been available since 2002.

School Streaming

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 669W, on streaming, if he will assess the extent to which the practices of *(a)* personalised learning and *(b)* teaching tailored to the needs of pupils are endorsed by the conclusions of the research review conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research. [145472]

Mr. Miliband: The practices of *(a)* personalised learning and *(b)* teaching tailored to the needs of pupils are fully endorsed by the research review conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research, which concludes that "schools need to take account of what is most appropriate for their staff, pupils, parents and community, in the context of their particular circumstances (such as class size, pupil ability range and resources) and national developments such as the requirements of the National Curriculum."

Schools (Leadership)

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what discussions he has had with the Chief Inspector of Schools about measuring effective leadership and management in schools; and what actions were taken as a consequence; [144906]

(2) what discussions he has had with the Chief Inspector of Schools about measures to improve the performance of schools, where that performance is assessed as being adequate; [144907]

(3) what discussions he has had with the Chief Inspector of Schools on *(a)* the consistency of reports on particular schools and their staff and *(b)* the grading of schools; [144909]

(4) what discussions he has had with the Chief Inspector of Schools concerning the number of *(a)* schools, *(b)* teachers and *(c)* lessons rated satisfactory; and what the consequences of these discussions were. [144910]

Mr. Miliband: My right hon. Friend has frequent discussions with HM Chief Inspector of Schools, David Bell, about a range of matters relating to standards in schools.

Specialist Colleges

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 967W, on specialist colleges, what the *(a)* Key Stage 3 and *(b)* GCSE/GNVQ value-added scores were in 2002–03 for those non-grammar specialist schools that select more than 10 per cent. of their pupils on the basis of aptitude; and if he will make a statement. [146187]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is set out in the following table[1]:

School	LEA	Key Stage 2–3 value added measure 2003
Chaucer Technology School	Kent	100.4
Chestnut Grove School	Wandsworth	98.9
Deacon's School	Peterborough, City of	100.9
Glyn Technology School	Surrey	100.4
Lynn Grove VA High School	Norfolk	100.5
St. Margaret's C of E High School	Liverpool	100.5

Key Stage 3–4 value added measures for 2003 have not yet been published. They are due to be published on 15 January 2004 in the "Secondary School (GCSE/GNVQ) Performance Tables 2003"[2].

[1] Source: "Secondary School (Key Stage 3) Performance Tables 2003" http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performancetables/ks3_03.shtml

[2] Information will be published on the following website: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performancetables/

Student Finance

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the impact on *(a)* mature students and *(b)* part-time students of (i) the proposed changes in tuition fees and (ii) contingent loan repayments. [143106]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* Mature students will be treated in the same way as younger students both as far as the proposed changes to tuition fees and to income contingent loans are concerned: where they are studying full time, up front fees would be abolished and they will be subject to variable fees of between £0 and £3,000 per year from 2006; re-payable following graduation and for any loans they take out with the Student Loans Company, they will benefit from the raising of the income threshold above which repayments are made from £10,000 to £15,000 from 2005. Part time students are already subject to variable fees: where they have taken out loans with the Student Loans Company, they too will benefit from the raising of the income threshold from £10,000 to £15,000 from 2005. We are introducing a new package of support for part time students in 2004/05, including a grant for fees of up to £575 and a course grant, neither of which are repayable. Mature students are also particularly likely to benefit from the new HE Grant of £1,000, being introduced from 2004/05. We expect around a third of all those getting the full grant of £1,000 to be independent, despite such students making up only around 15 per cent of the total student population.

Teachers

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much funding was made available for *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* all schools in England and Wales to pay for in-service training for teachers in each year since 1997. [145270]

Mr. Miliband: It is not possible to disaggregate funding solely for in-service training. Schools have the autonomy within their overall school budgets to determine how much they make available for training purposes in the light of their own priorities and needs.

Volunteering

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what plans he has to respond to *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* the EU presidency on the joint statement and conclusions from the November 2003 Conference on Youth Volunteering and Civic Service; [145035]

(2) whether he intends to take an active part in developing full time civic service and transnational volunteering programmes for young people *(a)* in the UK and *(b)* with other EU member states and accession countries; [145036]

(3) how he will involve the experience and contribution of UK youth volunteering organisations in the process of exchanging information, research, cooperation and development of civic service. [145037]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are committed to promoting opportunities for young people not only to volunteer in their local communities through such programmes as Millennium Volunteers and the Young Volunteer Challenge but also in Europe through the European Voluntary Service. During the Irish Presidency of the European Union (EU) we will seek to influence the continuing discussions on youth volunteering, building on the European Commission's White Paper on Youth Policy and the Conclusions from the Commission and EU Presidency presented to the Rome Conference in November. Within the spirit of the Compact with the voluntary and community sector and the EU Open Method of Consultation on Youth we will continue to work closely with organisations with experience of volunteering to develop and deliver our policies and influence European-level activity.

York Schools

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what his policy is on how to bridge the funding shortfall for schools in the City of York. [145134]

Mr. Miliband: On 29 October my right hon. Friend announced proposals to restore stability to school funding. Amongst the package of measures, we are ensuring that for 2004–05 all schools will see a guaranteed minimum increase in their per pupil budget amounting to 4 per cent. per pupil where pupil numbers remain the same. In addition, we have ensured that schools will receive an increase in the amounts of Standards Fund, School Standards Grant and funding from the LSC for sixth forms in line with the minimum guarantee.

We are increasing the School Formula Spending Share by a minimum of 5 per cent. per pupil—the City of York's increase is 6.8 per cent. This will give the Authority the headroom and flexibility to deliver the guarantee and provide support to help schools facing additional pressures.

On 10 December, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that a further £317 million will be going to local authorities in their Revenue Support Grant for 2004–05 for authorities with education and social services functions. This is on top of the increases already announced in the provisional settlement. For almost all authorities the additional grant will reduce the pressure on services and council tax, and will make it easier for authorities to meet education passporting targets. In the case of the City of York the additional grant amounts to £1.2 million.

However, if the City of York or any other LEA is able to put forward a compelling case that additional, transitional funds are needed in the short term—above and beyond those already available to the LEA —my right hon. Friend will be prepared to consider bringing forward grant payments from my Department, so that the LEA will have funds available in 2004–05 for this purpose, with the expectation of a consequential reduction to what they will receive in future years. The maximum amount that the City of York might be able to bring forward in this way would be £300,000.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Age Discrimination

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will ensure that those who choose to work after 65 enjoy the same employment rights as those under 65. [145128]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The great majority of employment protection legislation already applies to older workers, whatever their age. We will review upper age limits on statutory redundancy payments and general unfair dismissal claims, and make final decisions on them, in the light of responses to the recent public consultation on age "discrimination, Equality and Diversity: Age Matters".

Regional Development Agencies

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been spent by each of the Regional Development Agencies, in each of the last four years, on corporate plans. [146080]

Jacqui Smith: As set out in Quangos: Opening the Doors (1998) www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/central/198/pb/open/od main.htm, the Government believe that non-departmental public bodies should disclose as much information as possible including information on their role and achievements. England's Regional Development Agencies are required to prepare and publish Corporate Plans with a three year planning horizon, which are revised every two years, to synchronise planning and funding horizons with the Spending Review process. The current Corporate Plans cover the period 2003–06.

The amount spent by RDAs in each of the last four years on printing and distribution of such plans is set out in the following table. The figures do not include the cost of staff resources in developing the detail of the plans where they are produced in-house, consulting stakeholders on the policies and activities reflected in the plans, nor the cost of departmental resources in approving them, which could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Expenditure also varies for many reasons such as the number of copies produced, whether consultants were used or whether the plans were only made available on the internet.

£

	2000–01	*2001–02*	*2002–03*	*2003–04*
AWM	3,500	3,500	19,405	29,629
EEDA	4,477	8,268	8,051	8,416
emda			10,000	
LDA	—	500	20,038	27,162
NWDA	9,375	8,326	2,452	3,058
ONE	50,000	2,500	2,500	2,653
SEEDA[1]				
SWRDA	500	500	4,580	14,568
Yorkshire Forward[1]				

[1] No printing and distribution costs were incurred as the Corporate Plan is only available on the internet.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the average length of time taken for the Government to approve projects *(a)* projected to cost more than £1 million and *(b)* projected to cost less than £1 million, that are proposed by each of the regional development agencies, following the issuing of a corporate plan, in the last year for which figures are available. [146081]

Jacqui Smith: Under Section 5(2)*(a)* of the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 the Agencies may not give financial assistance without the consent of the Secretary of State. However, the consent of the Secretary of State has been given to each Agency to give such assistance subject to a specific financial limit and other conditions set out in its Financial Memorandum. Any proposed expenditure or guarantee that is in any way novel or contentious, regardless of its cost, also requires the specific approval of the Treasury.

During 2002–03, the average time taken for DTI to approve RDA proposals for expenditure exceeding the financial limit (£5 million during 2002–03) was 3–4 weeks. The average time taken to approve projects that required additional approval from the Treasury was nine weeks.

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who appoints board members of regional development agencies. [145061]

Jacqui Smith: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry appoints the Chairs of England's Regional Development Agencies, while responsibility for appointing Board members is delegated to me, as Minister for Industry and the Regions.

The process for appointing both the Regional Development Agency Chairs and Board Members is run according to the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments (this can be found at www.ocpa.gov.uk).

Appointments are made on merit, following open competition, application and formal interviews. Each applicant is assessed against the selection criteria, as set out in the person specification for the post.

Company Directors (Disqualifications)

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether a target has been set for the number of proceedings to be brought in the public interest for disqualification of company directors. [145380]

Mr. Sutcliffe: As announced by my predecessor, the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Miss Johnson), to the House on 28 March 2003, *Official Report*, column 30–31WS, no numerical targets are set for the disqualification of company directors.

The Insolvency Service is expected to bring proceedings in every case where it is in the public interest.

Departmental Grants

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funding is provided in financial year 2003–04 by her Department to finance the Enterprising Solutions Award. [145489]

Nigel Griffiths: Approximately £35,000 this financial year.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of staff employed within her Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145926]

Jacqui Smith: 13.5 per cent. of staff employed within DTI HQ are over 55 years of age. Of those staff recruited over the last 12 months (1 January-31 December 2003), eight were over 55, representing 3.8 per cent. of those recruited during that period.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what value of guarantees have been issued by the Export Credits Guarantee Department since 1997 which relate to *(a)* military and defence projects, *(b)* aerospace projects, *(c)* oil, petrochemical and gas projects, *(d)* environmental projects, *(e)* telecommunications and transport projects, *(f)* education and medical projects and *(g)* mining projects, broken down by country. [144806]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The information requested is in the following table, except for *(d)* environmental projects. While projects may have environmental benefits, for example: water treatment plants, or paper mills that use recycled paper as raw material, it would not be appropriate to class these as primarily 'environmental'.

ECGD has, since 2001, assessed the potential environmental and social impacts of all projects it has been asked to support, except for defence and aerospace, which are subject to separate processes.

The currency values of ECGDs Guarantees have been converted at the exchange rates at the end of November.

£ million

Market	*Military and Défence*	*Aerospace*	*Oil, Petrochemical and Gas*	*Environmental*	*Telecomms and Transport*	*Education and Medical*	*Mining*	*Other*	*Grand Total*
Abu Dhabi	—	—	8	—	—	—	—	48	56
Algeria	—	—	84	—	—	—	—		84
Anguilla	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Argentina	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Australia	—	57	—	—	2	—	—	8	67
Austria	—	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	13
Azerbaijan	—	13	—	—	12	—	—	—	25
Bahrain	—	157	—	—	—	—	—	—	157
Bangladesh	—	—	—	—	80	—	—	—	80
Barbados	—	—	—	—	11	—	—	—	11
Belgium	—	45	—	—	10	—	—	—	54
Botswana	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	9
Brazil	74	55	110	—	1	—	—	151	391
Brunei Darussalam	590	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	590
Canada	—	345	—	—	—	—	—	3	348
Chile	2	173	—	—	—	—	—		175
China	—	496	—	16	36	—	—	584	1,133
Colombia	—	19	—	—	—	—	—	—	19
Costa Rica	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Croatia	—	38	—	—	—	—	—	21	59
Cyprus	—	15	—	—	8	—	—	7	30
Denmark	—	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	24
Dominica	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	9
Dominican Republic	—	—	—	—	27	—	—	20	47
EC Market n/k	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	32	32
Egypt	16	43	7	89	2	—	—	62	220
El Salvador	—	82	—	—	—	—	—	—	82
Finland	—	32	—	—	—	—	—	—	32
France	—	—	8	—	10	—	—	—	18
Germany	1	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	19
Ghana	—	—	—	17	14	—	—	31	63
Greece	79	77	—	—	8	—	—	—	165
Hong Kong	—	194	66	—	192	—	—	42	494
Iceland	—	31	—	—	—	—	—	—	31
India	14	—	—	—	14	—	—	77	106
Indonesia	67	142	—	—	7	—	—	65	281
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	—	—	37	3	—	—	37	11 5	193
Israel	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	16	21
Italy	4	—	—	—	10	—	—	—	15
Jamaica	—	—	—	—	22	—	—	20	42
Japan .	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	25	27
Kazakhstan	—	—	—	—	38	46	—	—	84
Korea Republic of	82	231	—	—	5	—	20	34	372
Kuwait	8	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	94
Lebanon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	26
Lesotho	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Lithuania	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Luxembourg	—	84	—	—	—	—	—	—	84
Malaysia	363	—	40	—	10	—	—	773	1,185
Maldives	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	9	12

£ million

Market	Military and Defence	Aerospace	Oil, Petrochemical and Gas	Environmental	Telecomms and Transport	Education and Medical	Mining	Other	Grand Total
Mauritius	—	44	—	—	—	—	—	—	44
Mexico	—	—	68	1	4	—	2	77	151
Morocco	—	11	—	—	6	—	—	—	17
Netherlands	—	178	—	—	—	—	—	—	178
Nigeria	—	—	148	—	—	—	—	—	148
Oman	535	—	429	—	6	—	—	35	1,005
Pakistan	—	—	—	10	10	—	—	2	22
Panama	—	—	—	5	21	—	—	—	26
Papua New Guinea	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	36	36
Peru	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Philippines	—	151	—	—	21 2	—	—	142	506
Portugal	—	46	—	—	2	—	—	—	48
Qatar	178	148	—	—	—	—	—	—	326
Romania	106	—	—	—	7	—	—	86	199
Russian Federation	—	18	128	—	184	—	—	82	412
Saint Kitts and Nevis	—	—	7	6	—	—	1	2	16
Saint Lucia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Saudi Arabia	6,225	—	—	—	8	—	—	13	6, 247
Singapore	19	11 8	—	—	10	—	—	8	155
Slovakia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Africa	1 ,270	—	249	—	—	—	—	84	1,603
Sri Lanka	—	129	—	—	13	—	—	23	165
Sweden	4	171	—	—	—	—	—	—	175
Switzerland	—	21 0	—	—	—	—	—	—	210
Syrian Arab Republic	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Taiwan	—	83	—	—	—	—	—	141	224
Thailand	30	122	—	—	76	—	—	16	244
Trinidad and Tobago	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Tunisia	—	50	—	—	—	—	—	—	51
Turkey	253	70	33	23	25	—	—	88	493
United Arab Emirates	49	551	—	—	18	—	—	11	630
United States	65	937	—	—	—	—	—	46	1,048
Uzbekistan	—	43	—	—	—	—	—	1	45
Vanuatu	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3
Venezuela	—	10	—	49	—	—	—	37	96
Vietnam	—	20	—	—	—	—	—	30	50
Zimbabwe	—	—	—	—	77	—	—	12	89
Grand Total	10,115	5,480	1,43 1	230	1,226	46	60	3, 386	21,744

Ink Industry

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will ask the Competition Commission to investigate the share of Sun Chemicals, and its subsidiaries, in the printing ink industry within the United Kingdom. [141739]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 8 December 2003]:* Decisions whether or not to investigate competition related matters are for the Office of Fair Trading.

Media Takeovers

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make it her policy to ensure that, in relation to any takeover of a major national newspaper or media group, the procedures adopted by the regulatory authorities are transparent and impartial and that there is no ministerial involvement. [R] [145244]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry published a consultation document on 15 December 2003 seeking views on draft guidance which she proposes to issue on the consideration of media public interest cases under the Enterprise Act 2002 (as amended by the Communications Act 2003). The new regime is substantially deregulatory compared to the old, with a small number of narrowly defined public interest considerations approved by Parliament.

In relation to the newspaper public interest considerations (accurate presentation of news, free expression of opinion and plurality of views), new legislation recognises that, for newspapers, there have historically been a small number of cases that have raised public interest issues beyond those that would have been considered as part of a competition assessment. It therefore allows the Secretary of State to intervene in certain newspaper mergers on these public interest grounds. The draft guidance sets out some indications of the general approach she expects to adopt in deciding whether or not to intervene in a particular newspaper case. However each case will be decided on its own facts.

In relation to the scope of the broadcasting and cross-media public interest considerations, whilst in principle the Secretary of State .may intervene on these public interest grounds in any media merger case where these considerations are relevant, the draft guidance notes that as a matter of policy she expects thatintervention on these public interest grounds will normally only be considered in those areas where media ownership rules have been removed by the Communications Act.

The assessment of newspaper and other media mergers on competition grounds will be the responsibility of the competition authorities.

All of the procedures for all parts of the process will be transparent and impartial. Copies of the consultation document have been placed in the House Libraries.

Patents

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many patents involving life forms have been granted in the last five years. [145352]

Mr. Timms: Within the five year period from the beginning of 1999 to the end of 2003, 233 UK patents were granted which relate to life forms in general. This includes 47 patents relating to higher life forms, such as plants or animals, of which 13 specifically relate to animals.

Post Office

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria are used by the Post Office to define a community for the purposes of the network reinvention scheme. [145916]

Mr. Timms: The development of closure proposals under the urban reinvention programme is an operational matter for Post Office Ltd.

The programme relates only to post office branches that are defined by Post Office Ltd. as 'urban'. I understand that the company classifies as urban any post office within a community of more than 10,000 inhabitants. The Post Office has carried out detailed planning to establish which of its branches should be classified as either rural or urban and has developed a geographical mapping computer model, which measures population in terms of contiguous or very close agglomeration. Thus where a number of villages or small communities adjoin each other or adjoin a larger town, and the aggregate population of the area exceeds 10,000, the model reflects that fact and classifies it as urban.

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which communities within the Hemsworth constituency are classified as urban, under the Post Office criteria. [145917]

Mr. Timms: I understand from Post Office Ltd that the following six post offices in the Hemsworth constituency are classified as urban, being located in communities of more than 10,000 residents:

Kettlethorpe
Moorthorpe, South Elmsall
Sandal
South Elmsall
South Kirkby
The Common, South Kirkby

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what data source she has recommended that the Post Office use to determine whether a community has more than 10,000 inhabitants. [145920]

Mr. Timms: The decision to classify a post office branch as urban or rural is an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. I understand that the company uses a sophisticated geographical mapping model called the Geographic Information System (GIS) in conjunction with a number of external and internal data sets including census data and Ordnance Survey data.

Posting of Workers Directive

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effect that the Government stance on the Posted Workers Directive is having on *(a)* the job prospects for British workers in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the wage levels of migrant workers in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement. [145486]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The UK fully implemented the Posting of Workers Directive in 1999, providing all workers temporarily posted to the UK from another state with certain minimum conditions of employment as laid down by law. We have no reason to believe that its implementation has adversely affected the job prospects of British workers in the UK. Unemployment in the UK fell from 5.9 per cent. in the three months ending October 1999 to 5.0 per cent. in the three months ending October 2003 (ILO Unemployment Figure, Labour Force Survey, ONS).

UK employment rights are applicable to all workers, regardless of country of origin, so migrant workers are protected in the same way as other workers by the National Minimum Wage.

Shareholder Participation

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps the Government is taking to encourage shareholders to vote at the Annual General meetings of FTSE All-Share companies. [146150]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Government regards shareholder voting at company meetings as an integral part of shareholder engagement with the companies in which they invest.

We fully support the continuing work of the Shareholder Voting Working Group, which has recently embarked upon a new project to identify, and propose practical solutions to, the impediments to casting proxy votes successfully at company meetings. The objective is for there to be a noticeable improvement in time for the 2004 AGM voting season.

The Government has already enabled shareholders, through the Companies Act 1985 (Electronic Communications) Order 2000 implemented in December 2000, to use electronic communications to appoint a proxy. This enables shareholders to issue voting instructions electronically. As stated in our White Paper in July 2002, we also propose to introduce legislative measures to improve the rights of proxies. This will enable investors and others holding shares through intermediaries to ensure more easily that the voting rights in a company are exercised.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the Government's target is for average voting levels by shareholders in Annual General meetings for companies in the FTSE All-Share index; and what the average voting levels were in each of the last five years. [146151]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Government regards voting at company meetings as an integral part of shareholder engagement with the companies in which they invest. The Government believes that it is the responsibility of all those involved in the voting process to ensure that it works effectively, in order that shareholders have confidence that their voting intentions are registered at company meetings.

The Government does not collect data on shareholder voting levels centrally. Such information is available from a variety of sources, and shows that shareholder voting has increased gradually over the past five years, and now stands at around 53 per cent.

Small Business

Mr. Robert Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of the portfolio companies receiving Regional Venture Capital Funds have been Small Business Service SMART award winners. [146314]

Nigel Griffiths: The fund managers do not collect this information.

Solar Power

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* individuals and *(b)* registered companies have applied for grants under the Clear Skies Initiative as a result of including solar power in their home design. [146119]

Mr. Timms: The information is as follows:

(a) Currently, 1,445 applications for solar hot water heating systems have been received and 1,368 have been accepted, with a total grant value of £684,000.

(b) For community/not-for-profit organisations, 90 applications have been received and 67 projects have been offered grants totalling £955,766.02 for the installation of solar hot water heating systems.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many homes in the United Kingdom have solar panels. [146120]

Mr. Timms: The DTI does not keep a record of all solar installations but according to figures from the Building Research Establishment there are approximately 60,000 solar thermal systems installed in the UK.

We estimate that approximately 1,000 homes currently have PV installed.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been spent under the Clear Skies Initiative on grants to homebuilders that include solar power in their home design. [146122]

Mr. Timms: The Clear Skies initiative offers grants only to individual householders and community/not-for-profit organisations. No grants have been given directly to homebuilders.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps her Department is taking to encourage the use of solar energy cells. [146123]

Mr. Timms: The DTI is supporting the demonstration of photovoltaics (PV) in housing and large public buildings through the Domestic Field Trial (DFT) and Large Scale Field Trial (LSFT). A combined budget of £10 million is supporting the installation and monitoring of PV systems in around 500 houses (30 projects) and 12–15 large-scale public buildings. The Field Trials aim to raise awareness of PV technology, create confidence in its applications, and provide opportunities for the UK photovoltaics industry.

The Government is committed to a major initiative with industry and others to achieve a UK solar PV demonstration programme in line with our main competitors. The current programme, which started in April 2002 and is worth £20 million over three years, is the first stage of this process. At the halfway stage, over half the funding has been allocated.

The DTI is also putting effort into removing a number of barriers to the deployment of very small generators, such as PV. These include reduction of VAT to 5 per cent. for professionally installed systems, a new PV Annex to Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG22), simplified connection agreements to the local network (G77 and G83/1) and Installer Training and Accreditation Schemes. In addition, the Government plans to amend the Renewables Obligation to enable very small generators like PV to accumulate their production over a year, rather than a month, so as to qualify for ROCs.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Female Prison Population

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the female prison population. [146261]

Jacqui Smith: I have had no recent meetings with the Secretary of State for the Home Office on this subject.

Flexible Working

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what assessment has been made of the take-up by women of the right to request flexible working. [146256]

Jacqui Smith: Preliminary evidence, including hits on the DTI working parents website and requests for guidance, indicate that interest in the right to request flexible working by mothers, and fathers, is high. We recently published the top 10 questions asked by employees when calling the Acas helpline, and continue to gather evidence from a wide number of sources to build up a clear picture of the demand for, and uptake of, the new law.

The Department undertook an employee Work-Life Balance survey in 2003 as a baseline for comparison with a repeat survey due in 2005. The results will contribute to the review of the law that the Government are committed to initiate in 2006. Preliminary employee findings are available on the internet, www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/, and we are expecting to publish the full report soon.

We are working with key intermediaries, such as Working Families and Maternity Alliance, who are collating data through member/supporter surveys. These organisations are due to report their findings to coincide with the first anniversary of the new law to request flexible working in April this year. We are also working with Prima Baby magazine which is carrying out a reader survey, and aims to publish the results in the March edition.

The Department has also commissioned questions on flexible working which currently appear in the Office of National Statistics monthly Omnibus survey. The results of these can be made gender specific and will be available in spring 2004.

Gender Equality

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women (1) what plans she has to introduce a public sector duty to promote gender equality; [146251]

(2) what assessment has been made of the need for a public sector duty to promote gender equality. [146252]

Jacqui Smith: The Government are taking forward a significant legislative agenda on equality matters, and they have committed themselves to introduce a duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for women and men generally when parliamentary time allows. In taking this forward, the Government will be considering the experience gained with the duty to promote race equality introduced in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000).

Pregnancy Discrimination

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what steps are being taken to tackle pregnancy discrimination in the workplace. [146255]

Jacqui Smith: Discrimination on the ground of pregnancy or maternity is a form of direct discrimination on the ground of sex. The courts have interpreted the Sex Discrimination Act as meaning that discrimination on the ground that a woman is, or might become, pregnant is unlawful. This is reinforced by the amended Equal Treatment Directive published on 5 October 2002 which says that less favourable treatment on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity within the meaning of the Pregnant Workers Directive constitutes sex discrimination.

In 1999, the Government introduced specific protections to prevent women from suffering detriment and from being unfairly dismissed or selected for redundancy for reasons connected with their pregnancy, childbirth or maternity leave. We have also ensured a woman has a clear right to return to her job after maternity leave, on the same terms and conditions as if she had not been away.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister whether he or his officials have examined the transcript of the interview given by the Head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, on the Dimbleby Programme on 28 December 2003, with particular reference to Mr. Bremer's comments on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction; and whether he discussed Iraqi weapons of mass destruction with Mr. Bremer in his meeting with him in Basra on 4 January. [146583]

The Prime Minister: I follow developments in Iraq closely. When I saw Ambassador Bremer in Basra on 4 January, we had a wide-ranging discussion of the challenges facing us in Iraq, including the political process, reconstruction and the security situation.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Incapacity Benefit

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make it his policy to credit full-time students with National Insurance contributions in order to provide eligibility for incapacity benefit if they become ill. [145392]

Maria Eagle: Special provisions allow young sick and disabled people, who have not had the opportunity to work and build up a contribution record, to qualify for Incapacity Benefit (IB). Since 6 April 2001 young people who become incapable of work before age 20, or before age 25 if in education or training before age 20, may receive IB without satisfying the contribution conditions.

Pension Credit

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have called the Pension Credit Helpline more than once since April, broken down by number of people making each number of calls. [146043]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is not currently available in the form requested.

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many individuals received savings credit in the last period for which figures are available, broken down by declared savings of *(a)* less than £6,000, *(b)* between £6,000 and £10,000, *(c)* between £10,001 and £15,000, *(d)* between £15,001 to £30,000 and *(e)* over £30,000. [146052]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is not currently available in the form requested.

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many households have received savings credit awards since 6 October, broken down by awards of *(a)* less than £5 a week, *(b)* between £5 and £10 a week, *(c)* between £10 and £15 a week and *(d)* over £15 a week. [146084]

Malcolm Wicks: Up to 30 November 2003 there were 193,000 awards of pension credit where the savings credit only is payable. Of these, *(a)* 41,000 were of less than £5.00 per week, *(b)* 59,000 were of between £5.00 and £10.00 per week and *(c)* 92,000 were of over £10.00 per week. In addition, there were 83,000 awards where both savings credit and guarantee credit are payable.

Notes:
1. Figures are currently available only for the three bands to which the reply refers.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Figures might not sum due to rounding.
4. A monetary breakdown for households receiving both savings credit and guarantee credit will not be available until the November 2003 Quarterly Statistical Enquiry is published on 17 March 2004.

Pensioners (Hemsworth)

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Hemsworth constituency are in receipt of pension credit. [145919]

Malcolm Wicks: I refer my hon. Friend to the written statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State (Andrew Smith) on 10 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 90WS, and to the accompanying tables placed in the Library.

Pension Schemes

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pension schemes have started the winding-up process in each quarter since 2001; and how many pension scheme members have been affected each quarter, broken down by *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* people who had not retired when the winding-up began. [146021]

Malcolm Wicks: The Pensions Schemes Registry, administered by the Occupational Pension Schemes Regulatory Authority (OPRA), holds information on the number of pension schemes which are currently in the winding up process. Figures showing the number of schemes that have entered winding up each quarter since 2001 and have not yet completed winding up are contained in the table, along with the number of members in those schemes.

It is not possible to break these figures down by pensioner and pre-retirement numbers, as the registry only provides data on total membership numbers.

Schemes that have started winding up in the relevant period and have not yet completed winding up

	All scheme types		*Defined-Benefit schemes only*	
Quarter beginning	*Number of schemes*	*Number of members*	*Number of schemes*	*Number of members*
1 January 2001	423	11,365	44	4,744
1 April 2001	699	19,829	94	11,827
1 July 2001	443	18,138	70	10,805
1 October 2001	384	17,782	64	10,988
1 January 2002	511	15,760	66	9,610
1 April 2002	327	16,245	53	9,745
1 July 2002	394	14,674	54	9,735
1 October 2002	426	28,340	90	15,232
1 January 2003	451	18,877	59	8,118
1 April 2003	375	17,024	46	7,472

Notes:
1. The table does not contain schemes that started winding up in the time period given and have since completed wind up. The Pensions Schemes Registry only records the present status of a scheme so only those winding up at the moment are captured. This is unlikely to bias the figures extensively as the winding up process can take many years to complete, particularly for large firms.
2. The "All scheme type" column contains Defined-Contribution, Hybrid and Unknown Type schemes as well as Defined-Benefit schemes.
3. A winding up scheme is one which has notified OPRA that it has commenced winding up procedures.
4. Schemes have up to 12 months to notify OPRA of any status change, so the data for the current year is provisional.
5. Data is not available for periods after the quarter beginning 1 April 2003.

State Pension

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer, net of savings in means-tested benefits and additional income tax revenue, of paying state pensions in full at the rate of a Category A pension to every UK pensioner aged *(a)* 80 or over and *(b)* 75 or over, regardless of their contribution record. [145437]

Malcolm Wicks: The annual cost to the Exchequer from April 2004, net of savings in income related benefits and additional income tax revenue, of paying the state pension in full at the rate of a Category A pension to every UK pensioner aged:

(a) 80 or over is £0.66 billion

(b) 75 or over is £1.20 billion

1. Figures are in 2003–04 price terms rounded to the nearest £10 million.
2. Gross costs are estimated by the Government Actuary's Department and are consistent with Budget 2003 assumptions.
3. The additional costs take into account income related benefit offsets, which are calculated using the DWP policy simulation model and April 2004 benefit rates.
4. Additional income tax revenue is estimated by the Inland Revenue using 2004 tax rates

Recruitment Advertisements

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much has been spent on recruitment advertisements in the press, broken down by publication, by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* quangos under the Department and *(c)* non-departmental Government bodies under the Department (i) in the last year and (ii) since 1997. [145810]

Maria Eagle: Information about recruitment advertising costs is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much the NHS spent on anticholinesterase inhibitors for people with Alzheimer's disease in each year since 1997; [144843]

(2) what steps are being taken to ensure that people in long-term care with Alzheimer's disease are assessed for use of anticholinesterase inhibitors; [144844]

(3) what plans he has to re-issue guidance to trusts to ensure that local decisions about whether to prescribe Ebixa on the NHS for people with moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease are not postponed in the absence of guidance from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. [144845]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* The number of prescription items dispensed in the community for drugs for dementia and the associated net ingredient cost, for each year since 1997, are shown in the table. Information is not collected about the number and costs of drugs for dementia dispensed in acute and mental health trusts.

Number of prescription items and the associated net ingredient cost for drugs for dementia, dispensed in the community in England, 1997 to September 2003

Drugs for dementia	*April to December 1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*January to September 2003*
						Net ingredient cost (£000)	
BNF chemical name							
Donepezil Hydrochloride	656.8	1,919.2	2,917.4	4,178.2	8,815.3	16,078.3	16,829.7
Galantamine	—	—	—	13.6	880.2	2,469.9	2,834.8
Memantine Hydrochloride	—	—	—	—	—	21.1	392.9
Rivastigmine	—	29.2	297.0	681.0	1,309.2	1,997.9	2,262.3
All drugs for dementia	656.8	1,948.4	3,214.4	4,872.8	11,004.6	20,567.1	22,319.8
						Number of prescription items (Thousand)	
Donepezil Hydrochloride	7.2	20.2	30.4	43.6	91.2	169.3	181.3
Galantamine	—	—	—	0.2	11.3	31.1	36.2
Memantine Hydrochloride	—	—	—	—	—	0.3	4.7
Rivastigmine		0.4	4.2	9.9	19.7	30.5	32.3
All drugs for dementia	7.2	20.7	34.6	53.8	122.1	231.3	254.5

Notes:

1. The prescription information was obtained from the Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) system and is based on a full analysis of all prescriptions dispensed in the community, i.e. by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered in England. Total prescriptions include not only prescriptions originating from general medical practitioners in England but also from hospital doctors, nurses, and dentists, provided they were dispensed in the community. Also included are prescriptions written in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man but dispensed in England. The data do not cover drugs dispensed in hospital or private prescriptions.
2. Drugs for dementia are those defined in the British National Formulary (BNF) section 4.11.
3. The Net Ingredient Cost refers to the cost (which the dispenser is reimbursed) of the drug before discounts and does not include any dispensing costs or fees. It does not include any adjustment for income obtained where a prescription charge is paid at the time the prescription is dispensed, or where the patient has purchased a pre-payment certificate.

People in long-term care with Alzheimer's disease have the same access to drugs for dementia as people living elsewhere. If appropriate, those involved in their care will refer them as necessary for assessment by specialist mental health teams.

In August 1999 the Department issued Health Service Circular 1999/176 which asks national health service bodies to continue with local arrangements for the managed introduction of new technologies where guidance from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is not available. These arrangements should involve an assessment of all the available evidence. Funding for treatments, such as Ebixa, should not be withheld simply because of an absence of guidance from NICE.

Autism

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales have been diagnosed with autism on the latest date for which figures are available. [145690]

Dr. Ladyman: Details of the number of children diagnosed with autism are not available. The Medical Research Council (MRC) published a comprehensive review of autism research in December 2001 which provides an authoritative overview of the current state of knowledge on the prevalence, incidence and causes of autism. The report was commissioned by the Department of Health. It is available on the MRC website at: http://www.mrc.ac.uk/pdf-autism-report.pdf

The report says that according to recent reviews, there appears fairly good agreement that autism spectrum disorders affect approximately 60, and more narrowly defined autism 10–30 per 10,000 children under eight.

In February 2002, we allocated a further £2.5 million to the MRC to help them to take forward their programme of work on autism. Between December 2002 and July 2003, the MRC held a series of four seminars to encourage the development of good quality applications for autism research funding. Topics covered in the seminars were gut and the developing child; brain and mind (neuropsychology and neuroimaging); autism in populations and outcome measures for interventions in children and adults. On 11 July 2003, the MRC held the first of their annual fora for autism research "Breaking barriers, building bridges", in conjunction with the National Autistic Society, to bring together ideas stimulated by the previous four seminars.

The MRC will be taking decisions on the allocation of research project funding for further autism studies in early 2004.

Questions on the numbers of autistic children in Wales are a matter for the National Assembly for Wales.

Blood Products

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the Government's objective was in purchasing an American blood bank; and if he will make a statement; [144110]

(2) what factors led to the Government's decision to purchase an American blood bank; and if he will make a statement; [144111]

(3) what comparisons he has made between the safety of blood available from the American blood bank it has purchased and blood available in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [144112]

Miss Melanie Johnson: On 17 December 2002, following thorough options analysis work and detailed market research, the Department purchased the largest remaining independent United States plasma collector Life Resources Incorporated. The objective was to secure long-term supplies of non-United Kingdom blood plasma to ensure that the global plasma shortage would not reduce the availability to National Health Service patients of life-saving plasma products such as immunoglobulins and clotting factors. Large volumes of plasma are required for medicinal product manufacture, especially immunoglobulm.

The NHS has been using US-sourced plasma since 1998 because of the unknown and unquantifiable risk of transmission of vCJD through blood. At the time Life Resources Inc. was purchased, the US had no reported cases of BSE or CJD and was the only country able to supply the quality and quantity of plasma required. The US also has a well-established pool of donors, a well-regulated environment and a developed collection industry. The Government are aware of the one case of BSE reported in the US and considers this to be a negligible risk to the safety of the blood supply. This case is not in itself a reason to alter current arrangements but we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

It is standard in both the UK and the US that, in addition to screening donors for the major blood borne viruses of HIV, Hepatitis B and C, all blood products are heat treated or chemically treated to remove any viral contamination that may have escaped the screening process.

In the UK, expert advice is that if vCJD is transmissible through blood, the infection is most likely to be contained in the white cells and plasma. As a precautionary measure, we instituted universal leucodepletion (removal of the white cells) of all blood for transfusion from 31 October 1999.

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department gives to the National Blood Service on the questions which may be asked of potential blood donors; and if he will make a statement. [144861]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The National Blood Authority (NBA) undertakes a rigorous selection of blood donors as the first step in ensuring the safety of the blood supply. The questionnaire and accompanying interview of potential blood donors have been developed to elicit appropriate information relevant to donation. There are two important aims, which are to ensure as far as possible that the donated blood is safe for transfusion to patients and that blood donation is not detrimental to the donor's health.

Donors are accepted or deferred on the basis of the information they give the NBA using the United Kingdom donor selection guidelines developed by the Joint UK Blood Transfusion Services and National Institute of Biological Standards and Control which are used throughout the UK. All donors are asked to read a blood safety leaflet, which outlines key lifestyle risk factors.

The donor selection procedures and questions used in the UK are in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe and will be in line with the proposed European Union Directive 2002/98/EC (Article 29) on setting standards of quality and safety for the collection, testing, processing, storage and distribution of human blood and blood components.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many pints of *(a)* blood and *(b)* plasma were used by the NHS in each of the last five years; [145938]

(2) how much donated blood was used in *(a)* cancer operations and *(b)* transfusions in each of the last five years. [145940]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* Information on the number of units of blood and plasma used by the national health service in the last five years is not collected centrally.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the main uses are to which donated blood is put; and what proportion of donated blood was discarded in each of the last five years. [145939]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* Approximately half of red cell transfusions are used for medicinal purposes including anaemia, haematology and gastro-intestinal bleeding. The remaining half is used mainly in surgery, but also in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Figures provided by the National Blood Authority (NBA) show the proportion of red blood cells that the NBA has discarded over the last three years.

Percentage

	Time expired	*Collection discards*	*Testing related discards*	*Breakages and leaks discard*	*Processing discards*	*Total*
2000–01	0.1	2.8	1.3	0.6	1.2	6.0
2001–02	0.2	2.6	1.2	0.5	1.4	5.9
2002–03	0.5	2.6	1.3	0.6	1.1	6.1

The NBA does not have data for previous years.

The NBA strives to hold enough stocks of blood to meet extra or excess demand for blood in the event of any emergencies or major incidents.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pints of blood have been donated in each of the last five years. [145941]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* Figures in the table supplied by the National Blood Authority show number of units of blood donated in each of the last five years.

	Number of units donated
1998–99	2,389,622
1999–2000	2,427,052
2000–01	2,357,568
2001–02	2,379,784
2002–03	2,332,371

Child Mental Health

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the prevalence of mental health problems is in children aged *(a)* five to 10, *(b)* 11 to 15 and *(c)* 16 to 19 in England, broken down by gender. [145689]

Dr. Ladyman: Information is not available in the form requested. The tables show the prevalence of mental disorders in young people aged five to 15 years and neurotic disorder in young people 16 to 19 years.

Prevalence of mental disorders among five to 15-year-olds

Percentage

	Five to 10 years	11 to 15 years
Boys	10.4	12.8
Girls	5.9	9.6
All children	8.2	11.2

Source:

Office for National Statistics survey—Mental health of children and adolescents in Great Britain (2000)

Prevalence of neurotic disorder among 16 to 19-year-olds

Percentage

	16 to 19-year-olds
Men	8.6
Women	19.2
All adults	13.3

Source:

Office for National Statistics survey—Psychiatric morbidity among adults living in private households (2000)

Dentists

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change in the number of *(a)* adults and *(b)* children registered with a dentist in the last three years. [142061]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Adult registrations in the general dental service fell by 160,000 in the three years between September 2000 and September 2003 from 16.81 million to 16.65 million, a fall of 1.0 per cent. Children's registrations fell by 170,000 from 6.84 million to 6.67 million, a fall of 2.5 per cent.

During the same period, there has been an increase in National Health Service dental services provided by the personal dental services; the number of patients increased by 340,000 in the three years between 1999–2000 and 2002–03.

Some of the drop in registration numbers is due to improved procedures at the Dental Practice Board in removing duplicate patient records.

General population figures are not yet available for this period on a consistent basis that is based on the 2001 Census. However it is estimated that between 2001 and 2002 the adult population in England rose by 0.5 per cent. with the children's population falling by 0.4 per cent.

We recognise that dentists in some areas have reduced their NHS commitment and there has been considerable dissatisfaction since 1992 with remuneration system which is now seen as a disincentive to provide NHS dental care. Proposals in the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 will underpin a modernised, high-quality primary dental service provided through contracts between primary care trusts and dental practices and properly integrated with the rest of the NHS providing better access to services and an improved patient experience. With these new responsibilities will go the £1.2 billion resources currently held centrally.

Diabetes (Amputations)

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost of amputations due to diabetes was in each year since 1996 in *(a)* England and *(b)* each strategic health authority; how many people in each case have had amputations due to diabetes in each year since 1996; and what assessment his Department has made of the proportion of amputations due to diabetes that could have been prevented. [144776]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Data on the cost of lower limb amputations is not collected in the format requested. The table shows how many lower-limb amputations were performed in the years 1996–2003 in national health service hospital trusts in England.

Primary Diagnosis Diabetes (ICD10 codes E10-E14), With main operation of Lower Limb Amputation (OPCS4 codes X09-X11), Finished Consultant Episodes (FCEs)
NHS hospital trusts in England, 1996–97 to 2002–03

	Amputation of:			
	Leg (X09)	Foot (X10)	Toe (X11)	Total
1996–97	914	154	921	1,989
1997–98	79	476	634	1,189
1998–99	89	490	660	1,239
1999–2000	120	504	677	1,301
2000–01	97	457	621	1,175
2001–02	434	100	596	1,130
2002–03	384	115	621	1,120

Notes:

1. An FCE is defined as a period of patient care under one consultant in one health care provider. The figures do not represent the number of patients, as one person may have several episodes within the year.
2. The main operation is the first of four operation fields in the HES data set, and is usually the most resource intensive procedure performed during the episode.
3. The primary diagnosis is the first of seven diagnosis fields in the HES data set, and provides the main reason why the patient was in hospital.
4. Data in this table are adjusted for both coverage and unknown/invalid clinical data, except for 2001–02 and 2002–03 which are not yet adjusted for shortfalls.
5. 2002–03 data are provisional and subject to change.

Source:

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), Department of Health.

The Department of Health's Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) system provides information on in-patient care in England. With the clinical information given by hospital providers it is not possible to determine how many amputations due to diabetes could have been prevented. The national service framework for diabetes standards document noted that all people with diabetes should receive high-quality care throughout their lifetime, including support to optimise the control of blood glucose, blood pressure and other risk factors for developing the complications of diabetes. The standards document also noted that the impact of microvascular complications could be reduced if they are detected and treated at an early stage and states that all young people and adults with diabetes should receive regular surveillance for the long-term complications of diabetes.

Health Development Agency

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* budget allocations and *(b)* actual spending of the Health Development Agency in each year since 2000. [144785]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Health development agency allocations and expenditure[1]

£000

	2000–01[2]	2001–02	2002–03
Total Allocations/Income from Government Sources[3]	11,288	12,261	11,015
Net resource outturn[4]	11,462	11,960	11,024

[1] Information taken from HDA published accounts.
[2] The 2000–01 figures used are as per the 2001–02 accounts (restated as a comparator).
[3] Total expenditure may exceed the allocation or other payments to the HDA from Government because the HDA may earn income from other sources to cover that expenditure.
[4] Net Resource Outturn is the Operating Cost less other Income. This does not include Capital interest charges.

Healthy Living Programmes

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to evaluate New Opportunity-funded healthy living programmes; and what arrangements have been made to ensure that the lessons from such evaluations are disseminated. [145080]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The New Opportunities Fund is supporting a number of healthy living programmes, each of which will be formally evaluated. The Department of Health will study the evaluation findings carefully, and will work with the New Opportunities Fund to help ensure that lessons learned are effectively disseminated.

In addition, the Department of Health has commissioned its own evaluation of the health living centre programme through the Tavistock Institute against key health priorities such as cancer and coronary heart disease prevention. The Institute will be encouraged to publish their findings and the Health Development Agency will incorporate the findings into evidence and practice reviews.

Maternity Units

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his Answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column 772W, on maternity services, to what extent women are able to choose whether they will be seen in a midwifery-led maternity unit; and what effect the policy of their local health authority has on choice. [146324]

Dr. Ladyman: We expect midwife led maternity care to be one of the options available to women and their families. A woman's decision to give birth in a midwife led unit should be a matter for informed discussion between the woman and the health professionals responsible for providing her care.

It is up to local health organisations, working with their communities and other local partners, to provide high quality maternity services that are both as safe and as accessible as possible to women and their families.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it is the Government's policy that women should be able to choose to be treated in a midwife-led maternity unit. [146325]

Dr. Ladyman: It is Government policy that women should be able to choose to have midwife led maternity care. A woman's decision to give birth in a midwife led maternity unit should be a matter for informed discussion between the woman and the health professionals responsible for providing her care.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will reply to the questions from the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, tabled on 1 December, references 140640 and 140642. [145738]

Dr. Ladyman: I replied to the hon. Member's questions on Monday 5 January.

PET Scans

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what price is paid for each dose of radioactive, positron tracers used by each PET scanner centre. [145003]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The costs of isotope production are dependent on a number of factors, including whether the production is on a commercial basis and the costs of transportation to the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) centre. However, a report of the Intercollegiate Standing Committee on Nuclear Medicine, published by the Royal College of Physicians in January 2003, details that typical costs are around £315 for each dose of tracer.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the benefits of PET scans; [145004]

(2) if he will list the most common uses of PET scans; [145005]

(3) what plans he has to expand the provision of PET scanners over the next five years. [145019]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanning enables highly sensitive and specific functional imaging of metabolic processes involved in oncology, cardiology and neurology. It holds particular promise for cancer services.

In response to requests from National Health Service and research stakeholders the Department of Health will shortly publish a framework for PET scanning for consultation. This framework will enable the NHS to develop a clear national policy position which will set out, from the evidence, which tumour groups would benefit from PET scanning, likely future demand, and the optimal configuration and location of PET scanners. This would ensure that access to PET facilities was available to patients from all cancer networks and that high quality research could also be undertaken on the future applications of PET.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the number of PET scanners per head of the population in *(a)* England and *(b)* other EU countries. [145013]

Miss Melanie Johnson: There are five Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanners operating in the national health service in England. The Department has made no assessment of the relative numbers of PET scanners in England and other European Union countries.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost of each PET scan to the NHS was in each of the five centres operating PET scanners in the last 12 months. [145014]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The cost of each Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan depends on a number of factors, such as the condition the patient is being scanned for, the type of isotope used, transportation costs and the isotope supplier. This information is not held centrally.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff are *(a)* trained to operate PET scanners and *(b)* work in PET scanner departments in the NHS. [145015]

Miss Melanie Johnson: A number of professional staff are needed to run a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) facility. These include radiographers/nuclear medicine technicians; consultant radiologist/physicians, medical physicists, medical physics technicians; radiochemists and; radiopharmacy technicians.

Figures on numbers of staff trained to operate or work in PET scanner departments are not collected centrally.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many PET scans were carried out in each of the last five years funded *(a)* privately and *(b)* by the NHS. [145020]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The numbers of Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans carried out each year varies from centre to centre and this information is not held centrally.

Public Health

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether each *(a)* region, *(b)* strategic health authority and *(c)* primary care trust has a director of public health post and whether the post is filled in each case. [144783]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the arrangements are for ensuring that in every part of England an annual report on the health of the population is produced by a director of public health. [144791]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The 2003–06 Planning and Priorities Framework issued by the Department of Health requires service planning in the national health service to be supported by an annual public health report by the Director of Public Health. Strategic health authorities are responsible for ensuring compliance with, and delivery of, the framework.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on recruitment of chief executives of the Public Health Laboratory Service, with particular reference to the merits of recruiting *(a)* deputy chief medical officers and *(b)* microbiologists with experience of clinical practice. [145165]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) with a board which appoints its own chief executive, in the same way as other NDPBs and in accordance with Cabinet Office guidance.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of the Public Health Skills Audit referred to in the Department's memorandum of evidence to the Health Committee inquiry into public health. [144781]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The report of the Skills Audit has been placed in the Library.

Respiratory Disease

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the extent to which children under five years with respiratory problems are misdiagnosed with asthma. [146212]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many finished consultant episodes there have been for respiratory syncytial virus in *(a)* England, *(b)* each NHS region and *(c)* each strategic health authority in each year since 1996, broken down by age. [146211]

Dr. Ladyman: The information that is available has been placed in the Library.

Ritalin

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many young people *(a)* under 11 and *(b)* over 11 have been prescribed Ritalin by a health authority in each of the last five years. [145815]

Dr. Ladyman: Information is not available in the form requested. However the figures in the table following show the total number of prescription items of methylphenidate hydrochloride dispensed in the community in England in each of the last five years. The majority of prescription items of methylphenidate hydrochloride are for the brand Ritalin.

Number of prescription items of methylphenidate hydrochloride dispensed in the community in England—1998 to 2002

Thousand

	Total
1998	126.6
1999	158.0
2000	186.2
2001	208.5
2002	254.0

Source:
Prescription Cost Analysis data from the Prescription Pricing Authority

In 2002, around 91 per cent. of the 254,000 prescription items were dispensed in the community to children (children under 16 and young people aged 16 to 18 in full time education). An estimated 1 per cent. of the items were dispensed to people aged 60 and over with the remainder being dispensed to other adults. These proportions have been similar in recent years.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the long-term effects of Ritalin. [145816]

Dr. Ladyman: Ritalin is indicated as a part of a comprehensive treatment programme for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children over six years of age where remedial measures alone prove insufficient. In October 2000 the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) published an appraisal of the use of the drug methylphenidate (main brand name Ritalin) in the treatment of childhood ADHD and issued clinical guidelines for its use, including the need for regular monitoring of children receiving this therapy. NICE recommended long-term follow-up of adverse effects and the potential for misuse of the drug in assessing long-term benefits and health gain into adulthood.

As with all medicines, the safety of methylphenidate is continually monitored by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the independent advisory body the Committee on the Safety of Medicines. Comprehensive information on the use of methylphenidate, including possible side effects, contraindications and precautions is contained in the summary of product characteristics produced by the manufacturer and approved by the licensing authority.

Smoking

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out for each year of the programme the *(a)* total number of people who took part in smoking cessation programmes and *(b)* number of four week quitters; and what assessment he has made of the number and proportion of four week quitters who subsequently recommenced smoking. [145078]

Miss Melanie Johnson: We do not have the information in the form requested.

The table shows the number of people setting a quit date through the national health service stop smoking services, and the number of those who remain quit at four week follow up.

People setting a quit date and outcome at four weeks (based on self report) England 1999–2000 to Q1 2003–04

	Number setting a quit date	*Number successful (self report)*
1999–2000	14,598	5,760
2000–01	132,544	64,554
2001–02	227,335	119,834
2002–03	234,858	124,082
Q1 2003–04 April-June	64,691	33,926

Source:
Department of Health Smoking Cessation Monitoring Returns

The monitoring of the NHS stop smoking services establishes success four weeks after the client's quit date. This method was chosen as a viable, practical way to ascertain initial success.

Smoking is an addictive behaviour and it is difficult for smokers to stop. From the evidence of clinical trials, we expect that around 65 per cent., of clients successful at four weeks will relapse to smoking. The Department of Health has commissioned a research project to investigate further the success of the NHS Stop Smoking Services in helping smokers to stop in the longer-term. This is due to report in the new year.

The huge health benefit from smokers stopping means that services, such as the NHS stop smoking services, are highly cost effective.

Strategic Health Authorities

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out for each Strategic Health Authority the *(a)* budget and *(b)* spending on (i) language support, (ii) interpreting services and (iii) ethnic monitoring in 2002–03. [145081]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The information requested is not collected centrally.

The NHS Plan sets out a commitment to make available a national translation and interpreting service through NHS Direct. NHS Direct is currently involved in procuring a national interpreting and translation service by March 2004. This will provide access for all national health service organisations to a telephone-based interpretation and translation service. Information on the costs of local arrangements for language support and interpreting services cannot be disaggregated in the financial returns.

The Department has made a commitment to the collection of ethnic origin information using the 2001 Census categories for all statistical data sets collected from the national health service for England.

While the Department has promoted ethnic monitoring in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (and highlighted examples of good practice), the collection of ethnic data is largely incorporated as additional data items within existing collections, to minimise both the burden and cost related to the collection of such information on the NHS. This is consistent with the Department's procedures to ensure that the value of all centrally collected information fully justifies the burden and cost it places on those who provide it.

"Valuing People"

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 320W, on Valuing People, if he will list the other centrally funded projects which were funded through the £3.3 million. [144948]

Dr. Ladyman: The unused £3.3 million capital was not directly transferred from the Learning Disability Development Fund to another project. It contributed to the overall budget available for other capital projects, which were delivered in 2002–03 but which did not have funding set aside for them at the start of the year. An example of a project funded in this way was the refurbishment of psychiatric wards.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Council Tax

6. **Mr. Barnes**: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness and fairness of the council tax banding system; and if he will make a statement. [145889]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government acknowledged the criticisms of council tax in the 2001 White Paper, "Strong Local Leadership, Quality Public Services". Consequently we have established the Balance of Funding review which has been giving detailed consideration to key issues affecting the funding of local government. The review will be considering proposals for change in the course of the next few months.

Brownfield Land

8. **Mrs. Humble**: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister, if he will make a statement on progress in bringing more brownfield land into use. [145891]

Mr. Prescott: Through English Partnerships and the Regional Development Agencies we are reclaiming brownfield land at a rate of over 1400 hectares a year. This has enabled us to achieve our national brownfield target eight years early. By 2000 60 per cent. of new housing development was on brownfield land. By 2002 this proportion had increased to 64 per cent.

Regional Assemblies

9. **Mr. Grogan:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister, what assessment he has made of the benefits to the Yorkshire and Humber economy of an elected regional assembly. [145892]

Yvette Cooper: An elected assembly for Yorkshire and the Humber will enhance regional prosperity, pride and democracy. It will control or influence key elements impacting on the regional economy, including the work of Yorkshire Forward and policies affecting planning, housing, transport and skills. Similarly it will improve people's safety and quality of life through work on the environment, fire prevention, culture and sport and the promotion of public health.

Mr. Curry: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the estimated annual Government grant is to the proposed regional assemblies in *(a)* the North West, *(b)* the North East and *(c)* Yorkshire and the Humber. [146039]

Mr. Raynsford: Based on figures for 2002–03, and on existing programmes, elected regional assemblies would receive grants of around £780 million in the North West, £350 million in the North East and £570 million in Yorkshire and the Humber. Assemblies would also have influence—through consultation with, and making appointments to specified bodies—over budgets totalling £1,600 million in the North West, £600 million in the North East and £1,100 million in Yorkshire and the Humber.

In addition, the White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" published in June 2003 said "we envisage that, eventually, where there are elected regional assemblies, fire and rescue authorities will be regional bodies". In 2001–02, the existing local fire and rescue authorities spent around £238 million in the North West, £103 million in the North East and £159 million in Yorkshire and Humberside. These are the latest figures available. Broadly speaking, three quarters of the Fire and Rescue Service's overall budget spending is met by revenue support grant and national non- domestic rates and the balance from council tax.

Regeneration

10. **James Purnell:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his policy on involving English Partnerships in regeneration. [145894]

Keith Hill: English Partnerships is the National Regeneration Agency. It leads on the development of Urban Regeneration Companies. It works closely with the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders to regenerate areas of low demand and abandoned housing. Through the £400 million coalfields programme it is actively regenerating former coalfield areas and their communities. We are also proposing that EP take a leading role in overseeing development in the wider Milton Keynes area through close co-operation with the local council and other key stakeholders.

Standards Board

11. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the performance of the Standards Board. [145895]

Phil Hope: Ensuring high standards in public life—including in local government—remains a firm commitment of the Government. The Standards Board for England continues to command the Government's full support as it develops to meet the challenges set for

it by the Local Government Act 2000. Copies of the Boards Annual Report are available in the Library, and on the Board's website.

Building Regulations

12. **Norman Baker:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to amend building regulations to improve environmental performance in respect of water consumption. [145896]

Phil Hope: In response to statements made by my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs at the Better Buildings Summit, proposals to amend the Building Regulations to include the conservation of water will be taken forward early in the New Year.

It is anticipated that amended regulations will be laid in the latter part of 2005.

Telecommunications Masts

13. **Mr. Gibb:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his Department's code of best practice on the siting of TETRA telecommunications masts in the vicinity of schools and hospitals. [145897]

Keith Hill: The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development does not distinguish between different types of mobile communications base stations. The Code lists the factors that should be taken into account by network operators and local planning authorities in determining whether a school or college should be consulted. The Code makes no reference to hospitals.

Mobile Phones

14. **Colin Burgon:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what recent discussions he has had with the Mobile Phone Operators Association about their voluntary code. [145898]

Keith Hill: I have not had any recent discussions with the Mobile Operators' Association. My hon. Friend for Pontefract and Castleford will be meeting representatives of the Mobile Operators' Association and the five commercial network operators on the 19 January 2003.

Area Partnerships

Mr. Steen: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many area partnerships have been established in England; what their terms of reference are; and what funding has been awarded to each partnership, broken down by *(a)* county council, *(b)* district council, *(c)* town or parish council, *(d)* regional development agency, *(e)* market and coastal towns initiative and *(f)* other sources of funding. [145817]

Yvette Cooper: The key partnership in any area is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). A survey in summer 2002, as part of the Government's research into LSPs, showed that the vast majority of areas, at county and district local authority level, either had an LSP in place or were in the process of forming one. There are now approximately 365 LSPs across England.

LSPs must include representatives from and reflect an appropriate balance between the public sector including local authorities and other public services, and private, voluntary and community sectors. LSPs will operate by consensus, in order to reflect and retain the buy-in of partners.

The Government guidance, published in March 2001, states that it will be for local partners to decide the full range of work of their LSP. However, it does set out four core tasks.

- Prepare and implement a community strategy for the area
- Bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives to provide a forum through which mainstream public service providers work effectively together to meet local needs and priorities
- Work with local authorities that are developing a local public service agreement to help devise and then meet suitable targets
- Develop and deliver a local neighbourhood renewal strategy (in the 88 districts receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Fund).

LSPs are not statutory bodies and as such do not receive funding directly. However the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) enables the 88 most deprived authorities, in collaboration with their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to improve services, narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of England. £1,875,000 has been allocated for the period 2001 to 2006 and a full breakdown by local authority district is available.

More generally LSPs will work collaboratively with and through partners to access sources of funding to meet local needs.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to extend the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill to Northern Ireland. [145315]

Keith Hill: There are no plans to extend the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill to Northern Ireland.

Fire Service College

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the commandants and chief executives of the Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, since 1992, stating whether they were a temporary or permanent appointment; what steps he is taking to secure a permanent appointment as Chief Executive; and whether payments have been made in respect of *(a)* early retirement and *(b)* unfair dismissal of senior officers at the college in the last 10 years. [145791]

Phil Hope: Details of Fire Service College Chief Executives and Commandants are given in the table. The post of Chief Executive is to be advertised shortly on open competition.

No payments have been made either in respect of unfair dismissal or early retirement. In one case, a postholder received a payment (details of which are confidential) on leaving office, in accordance with his employment law rights.

Fire Service Chief Executives and Commands from 1992

Name	*Position*	*Dates of service*	*Status*	*Notes*
Brian Fuller	Chief Executive (and Commandant)	Until April 1994	Permanent	—
Nigel Finlayson	Chief Executive	May 1994 to November 1997	Permanent	Posts to Chief Executive and Commandant split
Frank David	Commandant	May 1994 to May 1996	Two-year secondment	—
Terry Glossop	Commandant	June 1996 to November 1997	Fixed-term contract	—
Terry Glossop	Chief Executive (and Commandant)	1 December 1997 to 19 December 2002	Permanent	Posts re-combined
Robin Currie	Chief Executive	1 February 2002 to 20 December 2003	Secondment	Terry Glossop suspended on 1 February 2002
Anne Frost	Chief Executive	20 December 2003 to date	Permanent member of College staff	Acting Chief Executive, pending open competition

Buildings (Energy Performance)

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether he plans to implement the requirements of Directive 2002/91 on the energy performance of buildings under the European Communities Act 1972. [145750]

Phil Hope: The Government are still considering how implementation may be best achieved. Present thoughts are that the way forward could be a combination of amendments to the Building Regulations made under the Building Act 1984, and new regulations, made under the European Communities Act 1972, where this is more appropriate.

Public Land

Dr. Whitehead: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what criteria his Department applies in respect of sustainability in the rules governing the sale or disposal of public land. [145753]

Keith Hill: Each Government Department assesses ways and means of delivering its objectives, and appraises the relevant options in line with the guidance in "The Green Book—Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government"—including the costs of implementation. If, for example, a Department wishes to secure sustainability objectives, and in order to do so, has to dispose of assets, the disposal should be done in such a way that meets the requirements of Government Accounting chapter 24. This should ensure that overall value for money is achieved and that the disposal is effectively and properly done. Overall value for money goes beyond maximising proceeds by including the impact of effective public service delivery. Disposal of land by local authorities is governed by section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. Local authorities may dispose of land in any manner they wish: my right hon. Friend The Deputy Prime Minister's only involvement is to grant or withhold consent where authorities wish to dispose of land at less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable and the proposed disposal falls outside the scope of the General Consent in The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Circular 06/2003. The rules on disposal do not, therefore, directly address issues of sustainability. These would be considered as part of the project appraisal or reasons for disposing of the land.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Historic Wrecks

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to enlist the help of vocational divers in South Devon in investigating historic wrecks off the South Devon Coast. [145774]

Mr. Caborn: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no specific plans for vocational divers in South Devon. The Department has enabled the development and implementation of English Heritage's initial policy for maritime archaeology, Taking to the Water, which clearly states the desirability of engaging with the sport diving and wider communities. Any proposals for initiatives can be made directly to English Heritage where they will be considered according to national priorities and subject to available resources. English Heritage are already encouraging sport diving initiatives in the Solent, the North East and the Isles of Scilly together with providing support for an England-wide training programme and shipwreck projects through the Nautical Archaeology Society.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what considerations resulted in her Department stopping vocational divers investigating *(a)* the wreck of a suspected Barbary pirate ship off Gara rock in South Devon and *(b)* the Salcombe Canon site shipwreck. [145775]

Mr. Caborn: The sites referred to as *(a)* and *(b)* are the same site designated under the Statutory Instrument 1997/2536, known as the Salcombe Cannon Site. The reference to the suspected Barbary pirate ship has arisen after research has shown that Barbary pirates were active around the period of the ship wreck in the area of Salcombe. Since designation the Secretary of State has issued licences to survey, surface recover and excavate the site. At the time of writing there are no current licences on this site, as there has been no application made to the Secretary of State. The issuing of licences since 1997 has enabled continued investigation of this site by vocationally based teams backed up by professional archaeological advice. Over the last 18 months this system has been supported by English Heritage. The Government's contractor for archaeological services in support of the 1973 Act has also visited this site and

others in South Devon this summer, managed by English Heritage and fully involving the divers licensed to investigate the sites.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the role is of English Heritage regarding applications for licences to investigate shipwrecks off the South Devon coast. [145819]

Mr. Caborn: English Heritage's role is to carry out administrative functions exercisable by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under the 1973 Act. English Heritage considers the merits of each case, consults the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites, the archaeological diving contractor and other interested parties as appropriate, before submitting a report and recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the additional cost to public funds is of involving English Heritage in the process of licensing historic wreck sites; and what the advantages are. [145820]

Mr. Caborn: The transfer of responsibility for licensing designated wreck sites and acting as secretariat to the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites to English Heritage has resulted in no additional cost to public funds. The administrative budget hitherto spent by this Department on these activities was transferred to English Heritage in 2003.

Benefits from the transfer include greater specialist expertise in the decision-making process and the management of protected wreck sites. Underwater archaeology projects are also now able to compete on equal terms with land archaeological projects for English Heritage grants.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will list information technology contracts in his Department with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146199]

Hilary Benn: The Department for International Development has had no information technology contracts above £20 million in the last 10 years. Our new systems and IT infrastructure upgrades have generally been modest in scope and incremental in nature. This has helped to reduce the potential risks and allowed us to stay generally on schedule and within budget.

South Africa

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment the Government have made of the impact of reducing aid to South Africa. [146162]

Hilary Benn: South Africa is not dependent on financial transfers from international donors—aid from all donors represents less than 1 per cent. of the country's annual budget. Donors' contribution to development in South Africa is in the form of technical assistance to build capacity to develop and implement pro-poor policies. DFID has contributed more than £200 million in technical assistance to South Africa in the 10 years since the democratic transition there. Figures for annual spending since 1998–99 and plans up to 2005–06 are shown as follows. As shown, and in line with our overall strategy on assistance to middle income countries, we are planning a reduction in planned expenditure for the year beginning April 2005. We are discussing with the South African government how to manage this. We will continue to maintain a substantial programme there in recognition of the poverty problems inherited from the apartheid period, the growing spread of HIV/AIDS, and the critical importance of successful transition in South Africa for the prospects of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

DFID-SA bilateral spending on Southern Africa MICs

£ millions

	South Africa	*Botswana*	*Namibia*	*Swaziland*	*Total*
1998–99	28.9	3.3	3.9	3.1	39.1
1999–2000	29.6	3.0	3.6	3.1	39.3
2000–01	30.1	2.5	2.7	1.6	37.0
2001–02	25.5	2.0	2.0	1.1	30.6
2002–03	36.4	1.1	2.2	0.8	40.5

Source:
DFID (2003) Statistics on International Development 1998–99 to 2002–03. Table 7.1.

Future framework allocation for Southern African MICs

	£ million
2003–04	35
2004–05	35
2005–06	25

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hospital Trolley Waits

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hospital trolley waits there were in Northern Ireland in *(a)* 2000, *(b)* 2001, *(c)* 2002 and *(d)* 2003; and how many there were in December of each year. [146305]

Angela Smith: Trolley wait information is returned to the Department in two different forms, on a quarterly basis and on a daily basis.

The total number of hospital trolley waits is reported to the Department by Trusts on a quarterly basis.

Number of hospital trolley waits recorded in Northern Ireland—1999–2000 to 2002–03

Financial Year	*Trolley Waits*
1999–2000	63,325
2000–01	75,879
2001–02	77,418
2002–03	96,382

Note:
In a small number of cases Trusts have returned data for a representative sample of trolley waits.
Source:
Departmental Information Return CH10

The Department also receives daily returns (Monday to Friday) on the number of trolley waits based on a snapshot taken at 9.00 a.m. in each accident and emergency department across Northern Ireland.

Number of hospital trolley waits recorded in Northern Ireland each December 2000 -03

December	*Trolley waits*
2000	Not available
2001	797
2002	915
2003	1,450

Note:
This information shows a snapshot of the number of trolley waits at 9.00 a.m. each week day morning.
Source:
Daily Service Pressures Report

Ports

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tourists *(a)* in vehicles and *(b)* as foot passengers passed through (i) Larne and (ii) Belfast ports in each of the last five years. [144267]

Mr. Pearson: The information requested on the number of tourists passing through the Ports of Larne and Belfast is not available in the form requested in the question.

However, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Passenger Survey provides some information on the number of tourists passing through the Ports of Larne and Belfast. The survey identifies visitors (non-Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland residents) who stay at least one night in Northern Ireland and exit via the Ports of Larne or Belfast. The survey does not break down the figures by foot and vehicle passengers. The results of the survey are provided in the following table:

Visitors staying at least one night in Northern Ireland and exiting via the ports of Larne or Belfast 1998–2002

	Larne	*Belfast*
2002	124,000	288,000
2001	101,000	357,000
2000	100,000	375,000
1999	121,000	375,000
1998	118,000	296,000

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Asylum

Mr. John Burnett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the judiciary about the power of Parliament to oust the jurisdiction of the courts in exercising a supervisory or other jurisdiction in relation to the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal. [145640]

Mr. Lammy: As part of the policy development process we have spoken to representatives of the senior judiciary and they are aware of the changes we plan to make to the system. As with much policy development, this consultation was undertaken in confidence and so I am not in a position to make the discussions or the outcomes public.

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what the *(a)* overall cost per annum and *(b)* average cost per case was for legal aid for asylum cases in each of the last five years. [145795]

Mr. Lammy: The Legal Services Commission is not able to provide the information in the format requested, as it does not differentiate asylum from wider immigration cases.

The overall costs for immigration and asylum advice, assistance and representation over the last five years in England and Wales are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1998–99	53.3
1999–2000	61.4
2000–01	81.1
2001–02	129.4
2002–03	176.2

The Commission's systems do not record expenditure in such a way as to enable a figure to be provided for the year-on-year, average costs per asylum case.

Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144975]

Mr. Lammy: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics web-site at http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

As there are fewer than 5 members of the senior civil service in my department with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the 'Code of Practice on Access to Government Information'.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Advertising

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent on recruitment advertisements in the press, broken down by publication, by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* quangos under the Department and *(c)* non-departmental Government bodies under the Department (i) in the last year and (ii) since 1997. [145801]

Mr. Rammell: The information is as follows:

Financial year to end March 2003

FCO London

Paper	*Cost (£)*
A1—Administrative Assistants—June 2002, September 2002, October 2002, March 2003	
South London Press	19,348.80
Metro and Evening Standard	91,544.00
www.thisislondon.co.uk	144.00
Total	111,036.80
A2—Executive Assistants—July 2002, October 2002, February 2003	
Evening Standard and Metro	15,722.40
Daily Mail	35,713.44
Ethnic Media Group	8,510.00
The Voice	4,261.68
Glasgow Herald	10,858.40
Scotsman (inc. Evening News)	12,690.00
Belfast Telegraph (inc. Sunday Life)	7,354.71
Cardiff Western Mail	14,064.60
Metro Manchester	2,352.16
Glasgow Evening Times	2,856.80
Edinburgh Evening News	3,816.80
Metro Scotland	913.20
Metro Birmingham	2,536.64
Total	121,650.83
B3—Operational Entry—September 2002, January 2003	
Belfast Telegraph	4,832.97
Cardiff Western Mail	9,615.50
Ethnic Media Group	5,513.68
Evening Standard and Metro	10,872.00
Glasgow Herald	10,985.60
Guardian	9,355.84
The Scotsman	11,160.80
The Voice	2,837.12
Total	65,173.51
Overseas Security Managers—January 2003	
Police Review	3,816.24
Pathfinder	3,550.12
Total	7,366.36
C4—DS General—September 2002	
Guardian	3,920.40
The Voice	1,317.40
Asian Times	1,645.00
Belfast Telegraph	2,055.16
Glasgow Herald	4,342.00
Scotsman	5,281.00
Cardiff Western Mail	3,347.90
Total	21,908.86
C4—DS Economists—September 2002, January 2003	
Guardian	6,480.00
Totaljobs.com	275.00
The Voice	1,317.40
Asian Times	1,645.00
Belfast Telegraph	4,680.32
Glasgow Herald	9,554.00
Scotsman	10,706.00
Economist	17,575.00
Cardiff Western Mail	6,469.40
Sunday Times Website	340.00
Ethnic Media Group	2,908.00
Total	61,950.12
Specialist Recruitment	
Accountancy Age	3,000.00
Asian Times Group	1,506.00
Bedfordshire Times	950.00
Ethnic Media Group	19,764.00
Evening Standard	1,296.00
Financial Times	5,250.00
Guardian	33,612.00
Luton and Dunstable Herald	1,577.00

FCO London

Paper	*Cost (£)*
Milton Keynes Chronicle	834.50
Milton Keynes Citizen	3,362.70
New Scientist	10,495.00
Northampton Chronicle	2,067.00
Northampton Herald and Sport	1,223.00
Northants Curon and Echo	1,587.00
Sunday Times	7,840.00
The Times	1,519.00
THES	3,165.00
www.jobs.ac.uk	470.00
Total	99,518.20
Diversity Advertising	
Hobsons Career Guide for Women 2003 Hobsons Career Guide for Students with Disabilities 2003 Hobsons Career Guide for Ethnic Minorities 2003 Hobsons Diversity Handbook www.hobsons.com microsite Newsletters for Ethnic Minority students	82,500.00
KAL—Careers Advice for Ethnic Minority Graduates Number Ten—Careers Advice for Women Graduates Arberry Profile—Careers Advice for Disabled Graduates Recruitment Brochures Spectrum—Careers Advice for Ethnic Minority 16–19 Year Olds	81,114.00
Headstart	3,850.00
Doctor Job's Little Black Book www.doctorjob.com employer profile	4,450.00
National Guide to Black History Month	3,100.00
Futures/Network News	5,600.00
Employment Opportunities website and newsletter	2,000.00
Black and Asian Graduate website	495.00
Total	183,109.00

FCO Hanslope Park

Paper	*Cost (£)*
C4 Contract Managers—April 2002	
Personnel Publications	4,465.00
Total	4,465.00
C4 Electrical Technician Officer—April 2002	
McMillan Scott	705.00
Premier Newspapers	4,450.76
Institution of Electrical Engineers	4,624.80
Total	9,780.56
D7 Head of Technical Security—May 2002	
Premier Newspapers	4,450.76
Express Newspapers	9,987.50
Total	14,438.26
C4 Investigating Officer—September 2002	
Daily Mail	4,758.75
Jane's Information Group	3,877.50
Total	8,636.25
A1 Mail Room Assistants—November 2002	
Evening Standard	1,057.50
Total	1,057.50
B3 Assistant Government Butler—March 2003	
Restaurant Magazine	1,938.75
Evening Standard	2,350.00
Caterer and Hotel Keeper	1,854.16
Total	6,142.91
Total cost of advertising April 2002 to March 2003: £716,234.16	

Note:
We advertise widely for jobs in the Diplomatic Service and specialist positions, as well as general careers advertisements placed in diversity publications and websites. The placement of adverts is reviewed regularly according to the nature of the position, cost and response from previous advertisements. The above breakdown for the years 1997–2002 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the total expenditure on *(a)* information campaigns and *(b)* advertising was for his Department for each year since 1997. [145405]

Mr. Straw *[holding answer 6 January 2004]:* The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's planned expenditure on information campaigns in financial year 2003–04 is £6,485,000.00, which includes:

£1.9 million on a "Think UK" campaign in China, plus £360,000 for the development of campaigns in Central Europe (partnerships with accession states) and North America (UK Science and Technology) to run in 2004;

A £2.4 million public diplomacy challenge fund which will support 81 projects in 51 different countries;

£825,000 on a major FCO web infrastructure project, which includes www.i-uk.com; a central portal site to promote the UK overseas jointly with our public diplomacy partners (British Council, UK Trade and Investment and VisitBritain);

£600,000 on generic public diplomacy publications.

£200,000 for public diplomacy activity promoting the UK's science and technology achievements overseas.

£200,000 to raise public awareness within the UK of the benefits and opportunities of EU enlargement.

In addition, the FCO provides grant-in-aid of:

£166.04 million to the British Council

£220 million to the BBC World Service

In the year 2002–03 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's separately identifiable expenditure on advertising totalled £602,670. The bulk of this comprised of media spend for consular publicity campaigns, which are aimed at encouraging UK travellers to be better prepared before going overseas, and advertising for recruitment purposes.

In the year 2003–04 planned separately identifiable expenditure on advertising totals £317,000.

I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Bill Rammell) gave to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Julie Kirkbride), today (UIN145801) for details of expenditure on recruitment advertisement between April 2002 and March 2003.

To provide a breakdown of expenditure each year since 1997 could be provided only at disproportionate costs.

Israel

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the UK voted on UN General Assembly Resolution 144–4 which demanded that Israel stop and reverse construction of the separation wall. [146207]

Mr. Rammell: The UK, in common with EU Partners, voted in favour of a UN General Assembly Resolution on 21 October 2003 demanding that Israel stop and reverse the construction of the wall.

DEFENCE

Body Armour

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the whereabouts of the sets of body armour bought since 1999. [145642]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

HMS Bridport

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether HMS Bridport will be made available for use by sea cadets. [145647]

Mr. Ingram: There are no plans to make HMS Bridport available for use by sea cadets.

Iraq

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to upgrade the living accommodation of service personnel in Iraq. [141061]

Mr. Ingram: A programme of improvements is underway. Hard-walled accommodation for 3,000 personnel who had previously been in tented accommodation has been moved to Iraq. We have also supplied and are in the process of installing air conditioning for all the accommodation used by UK forces personnel.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been paid to Iraqi families by the Government following incidents involving fatalities allegedly involving British forces since 1 May 2003. [141690]

Mr. Ingram: United Kingdom authorities have paid £8,125 to Iraqi families following alleged fatalities involving British forces since the 1 May 2003.

Medical Supplies Agency

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to change the system of budget and stock controls undertaken by *(a)* the Medical Supplies Agency and *(b)* military units whom they serve in the ordering, delivery, storage and use of materials, equipment, drugs and other medical items; and if he will make a statement; [145346]

(2) what budget and stock controls are undertaken by *(a)* the Medical Supplies Agency and *(b)* military units whom they serve in the ordering, delivery, storage and use of materials, equipment, drugs and other medical items; and if he will make a statement. [145347]

Mr. Caplin: The Medical Supplies Agency (MSA) budget and stock controls are governed by HM Treasury direction on accounts prepared to comply with Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000, MOD

Financial Management Policy contained in JSP 462 and MOD Resource Accounting Policy contained in JSP 472. There are currently no plans to change these procedures.

MSA produce Agency Annual Accounts audited by the National Audit Office, the most recent Accounts for financial year 2002–03 were laid before Parliament on 16 July 2003 under reference number HC 805.

MSA is not responsible for the internal budget and stock controls in respect of the military units whom they serve.

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his proposals are for the future of *(a)* medical distribution centres and *(b)* the Medical Supplies Agency. [145348]

Mr. Caplin: No decisions or any proposals for the future of *(a)* medical distribution centres or *(b)* the Medical Supplies Agency have been taken.

A review is being undertaken and is expected to conclude in the near future. A further announcement will be made to the House when appropriate.

Reservists

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what briefings are given to reservists on the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985. [146182]

Mr. Caplin: When called-out, reservists are provided with a copy of Joint Service Publication (JSP) 532 Guidance for reservists returning to civilian employment following a period of mobilised service. This publication explains the re- employment rights of reservists and, if necessary, how to go about formally seeking reinstatement under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985.

SA80 Rifles

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many modifications have been carried out to the SA80 rifle in the last five years. [145743]

Mr. Ingram: In the last five years the SA80 has been subject to a major modification programme to improve its reliability by either replacing or reengineering components. Work began in 2001 and is scheduled to be completed by May 2006. Approximately 93,000 modified weapons have been issued to date. The basic design and concept of the modified SA80—the SA80 A2—remains the same, but there are significant engineering improvements to the internal gas systems, firing pin, bolt, hammer and barrel. The cocking lever has been redesigned to deflect spent cases and reduce the chance of stoppages, and the new magazine is more reliable and robust. Work has also been undertaken on the safety catch/plunger, and following successful trials of a revised safety plunger during Op TELIC, a contract will be let shortly to procure a sufficient quantity to modify all weapons.

The modification programme also includes enhanced ancillaries. An Operational Cleaning Kit has been developed which enables the user to undertake an operational clean without dismantling the weapon. This is being issued to all troops deployed on Op TELIC in the infantry role.

Ships (Pay-off Dates)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the pay-off dates are for *(a)* HMS Sovereign, *(b)* HMS Superb, *(c)* HMS Spartan, *(d)* HMS Sceptre, *(e)* HMS Invincible, *(f)* HMS Newcastle, *(g)* HMS Cardiff, *(h)* HMS Glasgow, *(i)* HMS Liverpool, *(j)* HMS Exeter, *(k)* HMS Southampton, *(l)* HMS Nottingham, *(m)* HMS Manchester, *(n)* HMS Gloucester, *(o)* HMS Edinburgh and *(p)* HMS York. [145652]

Mr. Ingram: The present planned decommissioning dates for each of the Royal Navy vessels listed are given in the following table.

HMS	*Year*
Swiftsure Class submarine:	
Sovereign	2006
Superb	2008
Spartan	2006
Sceptre	2010
Invincible Class aircraft carrier:	
Invincible	2010
Type 42 Destroyer:	
Newcastle	2007
Cardiff	2008
Glasgow	2009
Liverpool	2009
Exeter	2010
Southampton	2011
Nottingham	2012
Manchester	2012
Gloucester	2013
Edinburgh	2014
York	2013

Type-45 Destroyer

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what major design modifications have been made to the hull of the Type 45 destroyer in the past two years. [145643]

Mr. Ingram: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Corporate Killing

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is his policy that the forthcoming Bill on corporate killing should encompass pharmacovigilance. [145220]

Paul Goggins: The Government is committed to reforming the law on involuntary manslaughter to make it more effective in convicting companies and other organisations of manslaughter where a death has occurred due to systemic management failure. We will publish our proposals in more detail in due course.

Elder Abuse

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government uses a formal definition of elder abuse. [145630]

Dr. Ladyman: I have been asked to reply.

Statutory guidance, "No secrets", issued by the Home Office and the Department of Health in 2000 defines abuse of vulnerable adults as a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It goes on to say that abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts and can manifest itself as physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial or material abuse, neglect and acts of omission, and discriminatory abuse.

Anti-social Behaviour Act

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the powers contained in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 will be available to the police. [146312]

Ms Blears: All of the measures in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 will need to be commenced by Order.

The first set of measures will be commenced under The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provisions) Order 2003 (Statutory Instrument 2003 Number 3300 (C.130)) made on 17 December 2003. This brings into force a number of the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 on 20 January 2004 and 27 February 2004.

Orders commencing the remaining measures in the Act will come into effect before the end of 2004. We will be publishing a detailed timetable giving the dates for the commencement of the remaining sections of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 shortly.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what *(a)* services and *(b)* support the Government is providing to young female asylum seekers who are pregnant through (i) rape and (ii) sexual assault to (A) prevent their isolation and (B) aid their participation in community life; [144503]

(2) what *(a)* services and *(b)* assistance the Government is providing for young female asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom who are pregnant as a result of (i) rape and (ii) sexual assault in their country of origin. [144504]

Beverley Hughes: Anyone who has lodged a formal application for asylum in the United Kingdom is entitled to access health services. Health assessments are offered in induction centres to allow early identification of health care needs and in the event that an asylum seeker is dispersed, they will take with them a patient handheld record which health professionals can access. Asylum seekers housed in emergency accommodation pending dispersal also have access to health services. If an individual case is referred to and accepted by the Medical Foundation then they will normally be able to remain in London to access the specialist care that only the Foundation can provide.

On arrival in a dispersal area, advice is provided to help applicants access local services, including medical facilities. In the case of a pregnant woman she will be given appropriate ante-natal care by the local Primary Care Trust. She will also be entitled to access those services which are generally available to women who have been raped. NASS's policy of dispersal according to language seeks to ensure that individuals are not isolated without any support from their community. We also encourage the active participation of asylum seekers in community life through, for example, our Purposeful Activities Scheme and through volunteer and mentoring schemes.

People who arrive in the United Kingdom alone and are under 18 will be treated as unaccompanied asylum seeking children and will be cared for by local social services departments. There they will be entitled to the same care for pregnancy and trauma as any other child in that situation.

In the event that an asylum seeker is raped or sexually assaulted in the United Kingdom then she is entitled to the same protection under the law as anyone else. She would also be offered access to available victim support and counselling services to deal with the consequences of an assault, such as trauma and pregnancy.

Domestic Violence

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the policies in place to tackle domestic violence. [146269]

Mr. Blunkett: This Government are determined to tackle domestic violence. As part of our overall strategy we have introduced the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill which will ensure an effective police response when victims report domestic violence, and make sure that the civil and criminal law offer the maximum protection to all victims to stop the violence recurring.

The main measures relating to domestic violence in the Bill are: making breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence; making common assault an arrestable offence; enabling courts to impose restraining orders when sentencing for any offence, and on acquittal for any offence if the courts consider it necessary to protect the victim; extending access to non-molestation and occupation orders to same-sex couples and couples who have never cohabited or been married; and issuing guidance to agencies on holding multi-agency reviews following domestic violence homicides.

We recognise that legislation alone cannot deliver improvements to services that victims need. The Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence will, over the next two years and beyond, oversee a programme of work which focuses on prevention, protection and justice, and support. Among other things, we will be looking at education and tackling risk factors, improving the police and CPS handling of domestic violence cases, delivering new refuge places and providing help and advice to those victims who wish to stay in their own homes. Further details can be found in the Summary of Responses to "Safety and Justice: the

Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence", copies of which can be found in the House of Commons Library.

Elderly Prisoners

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to develop a national strategy to deal with elderly prisoners; [145625]

(2) if he will make a statement on prison resources directed at the rehabilitation of prisoners aged 65 years and above. [145632]

Paul Goggins: At the present time there are no plans for the Prison Service to put in place a separate national strategy for older prisoners. The current policy is to assess all prisoners' individual needs through sentence planning. This includes taking account of any requirements related to a prisoner's age.

There are no specific resources allocated to the rehabilitation of older prisoners. However through a system of sentence planning, the Prison Service ensures that all prisoners undertake activities necessary to reduce their risk to the public on release and provides any necessary resettlement support.

Gloucester Prison

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for admitting young offenders to HMP Gloucester following the announcement of closure of Ashfield Young Offender Institution. [144960]

Paul Goggins: The allocation of Young Adult Offenders (YAOs) aged 18–20, into Gloucester prison forms part of the ongoing programme to adjust the population mix of adult and young prisoners at a number of establishments. This is in response to the requirements of the Youth Justice Board for juvenile places and to increasing demand for spaces for adult male prisoners. This will be achieved through careful monitoring of population changes and the allocation of prisoners to establishments appropriate to their needs. It will also ensure maximum use of all available spaces in the prison estate, while minimising the distance of remand prisoners from the courts. This will enable the Prison Service to maintain its service to the courts despite the population pressures.

Ashfield prison is not being closed, but will instead only hold young prisoners, aged 15–17. Gloucester and other prisons in the area will hold remand and sentenced YAOs. Sentenced YAOs returning from court will be held at Gloucester for the minimum time possible before being transferred on to other establishments with YAO regimes.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the reasons are for the delay by the Director General of the Prison Service in replying to correspondence from the Independent Monitoring Board Chairman following the decision to re-admit young offenders to Gloucester prison. [144961]

Paul Goggins: The Director General of the Prison Service replied to the Chairman of the Independent Monitoring Board for Gloucester prison on 2 December 2003.

Juvenile Offenders (Education)

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children in prison were awarded GCSEs in 2003. [145091]

Paul Goggins: In 2003 young people in juvenile establishments achieved 189 GCSEs.

Because the majority of learners in juvenile establishments have very low levels of basic skills, a national curriculum model is not necessarily appropriate for them.

Prisons

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many seizures of alcohol were made in prisons in the last two years, broken down by month; and what estimate his Department has made of the quantity of alcohol produced illicitly within prisons in that period. [144270]

Paul Goggins: This information is not recorded centrally and its collection could be achieved only at disproportionate cost.

The Prison Service is currently developing an Alcohol Strategy, which is expected to be finalised by March 2004. This will include a system for appropriate data to be collected centrally in order to assist the effective monitoring of performance and security.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of *(a)* men and *(b)* women received into prisons in the last 12 months have been sentenced to immediate custody following breach of a community order. [144273]

Paul Goggins: According to sentencing data, 7,825 males were sentenced to immediate custody in England and Wales in 2002 following a breach of a community sentence which represents 9 per cent. of prison receptions under sentence during 2002. For females the corresponding figures are 904 and 12 per cent.

Information on the numbers received into prison because they have breached a community sentence is not comprehensively recorded in the prisons data, as prisoners may be recorded under the nature of their original offence.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many added days were awarded as punishment for *(a)* drug offences and *(b)* other disciplinary offences in prisons in England and Wales in each year since 1997; and at what cost. [143384]

Paul Goggins: Information on the use of added days awarded as punishment for drugs offences and other disciplinary offences in 1997 to 2002 is published in table 8.5 in Prison Statistics England and Wales, 1997 to 2002.

Copies of Prison Statistics England and Wales are available in the Library.

Costs of adjudications are not held centrally.

Sentencing Guidelines Council

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the membership, role and functions of the proposed Sentencing Guidelines Council; and what plans he has to ensure that there are representatives on the Council from all Government regions. [144743]

Paul Goggins: The composition and functions of the Sentencing Guidelines Council are defined by the Criminal Justice Act 2003. The Council will be responsible for setting guidelines for the full range of criminal offences and on general sentencing matters. These guidelines will apply to all courts.

The range of offending behaviour covered by an offence is usually very wide. The guidelines will help to ensure that there is a clear starting point for sentence and agreed aggravating and mitigating factors. The purpose of creating the Council is to achieve greater consistency of sentencing throughout England and Wales.

The Council will consist of the Lord Chief Justice, seven judicial members appointed by the Lord Chancellor and four non-judicial members appointed by the Home Secretary. Non-judicial members are eligible for appointment if they have experience in one or more of the following areas:

Policing

Criminal prosecution

Criminal defence

The promotion of the Welfare victims

The criteria for membership are defined in the Act; these do not include any reference to Government Regions.

Sexual Assaults

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sexual assault referral centre pilots there are; what assessment has been made of them; if he will make a statement on the new round of bids for support for such centres; and whether existing pilot sites can apply for expansion. [141197]

Paul Goggins: The Government are aware of seven existing sexual assault referral centres (SARCs). These are not pilot schemes; but are local initiatives that have been established jointly by the police and local health organisations.

The Home Office has funded research to establish the effectiveness of SARCs by evaluating three existing centres. Research findings will be available in spring of next year.

The Home Office recently made funds available from the crime reduction programme to support the development of sexual assault referral centres. In September, police forces were invited to bid for this funding.

Funding was prioritised for the establishment of new SARCs, however forces with existing SARCs were also eligible to apply.

Bids were received from 18 police forces. Successful police forces have been notified.

Allocations will be announced in the near future.

Sudbury Prison

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners at HM Prison Sudbury have absconded during *(a)* 2003 and *(b)* 2002. [141398]

(2) how many prisoners who absconded from HM Prison Sudbury during *(a)* 2003 and *(b)* 2002 have not been recaptured; [141263]

(3) how long it took to recapture each prisoner who absconded from HM Prison Sudbury during *(a)* 2003 and *(b)* 2002; [141264]

(4) how many of the prisoners at HM Prison Sudbury who absconded during *(a)* 2003 and *(b)* 2002 were convicted of (i) murder, (ii) grievous bodily harm and (iii) sexual offences; [141400]

(5) how many of those who absconded from HM Prison Sudbury during *(a)* 2003 and *(b)* 2002 committed further offences for which they have been charged during the period of time they were away from the prison; and with what offences they were charged. [141262]

Paul Goggins: The figures given relate to financial years. In 2002–03 the number of prisoners who absconded from HMP Sudbury was 67. Of these seven have not yet been recaptured. As at 1 December 2003, 56 prisoners had absconded from Sudbury during 2003–04. Of these, 14 have not yet been recaptured. All prisoners who are recaptured after absconding from open prisons like Sudbury are immediately returned to closed establishments.

The following two tables set out the length of time taken to recapture these prisoners, and the number of abscondees serving sentences for murder, grievous bodily harm and sex offences.

Unlawfully at large	*April 2002–03*	*April 2003 to date*
1 day	7	11
2–5 days	12	10
6–10 days	3	3
11–20 days	6	5
21–30 days	7	3
31–50 days	11	6
51–100 days	10	2
101–200 days	4	1
201–300 days	0	1
Over 300 days	0	0
Still unlawfully at large	7	14
Total	67	56

Offence	*2002–03*	*2003–04 to date*
Murder	2	5
GBH	3	6
Sex offences	0	0

Information on offences committed by prisoners during their period at large is not held in the form requested. As prisoners recaptured after absconding

from Sudbury would immediately be sent to a closed establishment, Sudbury would not be informed of the subsequent convictions of those who had previously absconded.

Restraining Orders

Mr. Mark Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many restraining orders have been issued by the courts in each of the last five years. [143389]

Paul Goggins: Restraining orders for sexual offenders came into force on 1 June 2001 under the Sex Offenders Act 1997 as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. 17 restraining orders were issued by the courts between 1 June 2001 and 31 December 2002. Figures for 2003 will not be available until next year.

Suicide

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people have been prevented from committing suicide in 2003; [145088]

(2) how many people are in a persistent vegetative state as a result of attempting to hang themselves in prisons. [145092]

Paul Goggins: The Prison Service is aware of one case of a prisoner in a persistent vegetative state as a result of attempting to hang themselves in prison. Prison Health (now a part of the Department of Health) do not collate this information centrally.

In 2003 (to 31 October), 176 prisoners in England and Wales have been resuscitated following acts of self-harm, which reflect a considerable amount of staff effort and expertise. Many more prisoners are supported through periods of crisis with the help of numerous agencies and support mechanisms available to them in custody. All prisons offer access to the Samaritans, and most prisons operate peer support schemes, most commonly the Samaritans Listener Scheme. Further avenues of support include counselling and help with a range of issues including: substance misuse, healthcare, mental health problems and contact with home.

Young Offenders

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* assaults on officers and *(b)* other assaults took place at Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Wetherby was in (i) 1999–2000 and (ii) 2000–01. [145651]

Paul Goggins: The numbers of assaults on staff, on trainees and on others at Wetherby for each of the two years are shown in the table below. The figures held for assaults on staff do not distinguish how many of the assaults were on Prison Officers specifically.

The figures for serious assaults, i.e. those resulting in the victim receiving medical treatment, are shown in brackets.

Figures for serious assaults

	Number of assaults on staff	*Number of assaults on trainees*	*Number of assaults on others*
April 1999 to March 2000	24 (0)	119 (4)	2 (0)
April 2000 to March 2001	45 (2)	84 (2)	6 (0)

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to ensure six hours of purposeful activity and a minimum of 10 hours out of cell per day for child prisoners held in segregation. [145095]

Paul Goggins: Children held in segregation units in young offender institutions must be given access to education, training, work and physical education. They will be given as much access to those and other out-of-cell activities as is practicable, taking into account the reasons for the segregation and the risks in each case as well as the facilities and resources available locally.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 8 January 2004

TREASURY

Illegal Meat Imports

Laura Moffatt: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in intercepting illegally imported meats in the luggage of travellers entering the UK. [146373]

John Healey: Customs took over enforcement responsibility for imported products of animal origin (POAO), including meat, on 11 April 2003 and have made good progress in fulfilling their obligations under the Government's Action Plan 2003–04 On Illegal Imports Of Meat, Other Animal Products, Plants, And Plant Products.

A letter to stakeholders, prepared by Defra in conjunction with Customs, sets out progress against all aspects of the action Plan. It can be found on the Defra website at: www.defra.qov.uk/animalh/illeqali

I have placed a copy in the Library of the House.

Information for preceding years was submitted by Defra in its "Annual Review of Controls on Imports of Animal Products: April 2002—March 2003", a copy of which is also available in the Library of the House.

Industrial and Provident Societies

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what timetable the Treasury has set for reviewing the audit requirements for industrial and provident societies once the Department of Trade and Industry has completed its review of company law. [145525]

Mr. Love: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proposals he has to amend industrial and provident society legislation to make it consistent with existing company law; and if he will make a statement; [145372]

(2) what steps he has taken to review the law relating to industrial and provident societies; and if he will make a statement; [145495]

(3) what plans he has to bring forward proposals to update legislation relating to industrial and provident societies; and if he will make a statement. [145496]

Ruth Kelly: The Government are keen to see, where appropriate, a level playing field between industrial and provident societies and companies. We are currently examining our options for taking forward this agenda. However, in order to provide for a strategic, consistent and up-to-date approach between companies and societies, the Government believe that the general modernisation of industrial and provident society legislation in this area should be considered in the light of the DTI's planned major reform of company law, announced in the "Modernising Company Law" White Paper published in July 2002. The timetable for reviewing the audit requirements will be determined by the timetable for the review of company law.

Leeds, North-West

Mr. Best: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of families in the Leeds, North-West constituency who will benefit from the child trust fund. [146205]

Ruth Kelly: All eligible children born since 1 September 2002 in families awarded child benefit will receive a child trust fund (CTF). Based on take-up of child benefit, it is estimated that virtually all children born will receive a CTF. Projected birth figures by Parliamentary constituency are not available, although figures for actual births and numbers receiving child benefit by parliamentary constituency are available in the House of Commons Library.

The CTF is intended to encourage parents and children to develop the savings habit. It will ensure that every child, whatever their family background, will have access at the age of 18 when they begin their adult life, to a stock of assets which they can invest in their future.

It will also help children and their parents to understand the benefits of saving and investment and how to engage with financial institutions.

Leyton Sixth Form College

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it is his policy that the additional sum for research and development announced in his pre-Budget report will be filtered down to local colleges which have good science study courses; whether he expects Leyton Sixth Form College to gain from the additional funds; and if he will make a statement. [146358]

John Healey: The additional spending on research and development announced in the pre-Budget report 2003 arose from improvements to the R&D tax credits schemes for both small and large companies.

The improvements included a new draft definition of R&D and an extension of qualifying costs. These changes will give companies greater clarity and certainty, as well as broadening the scope of expenses on which the credit can be claimed.

The pre-Budget report also set out the main findings of the Lambert Review into the links between universities and businesses in the UK and the significant benefits to be gained from greater collaboration. Key recommendations included a new funding stream for business-relevant research and the encouragement of new forms of networks between business people and academics. The Government will make a full response to the recommendations by summer 2004.

Mutual and Co-operative Businesses

Mr. Drew: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change the tax regime for mutual and co-operative businesses. [146497]

Dawn Primarolo: The Government keep all taxes under review and any changes are announced as part of the normal Budget process.

Offshore Tax Havens

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of tax revenue lost to the UK Exchequer in each of the last five years due to tax policies of the administrations of *(a)* the Channel Islands, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* the Cayman Islands, *(d)* Bermuda and *(e)* other Caribbean islands for which the UK Government has a responsibility; and if he will make a statement. [146360]

Dawn Primarolo: There is no reliable measure of total tax revenue lost to the UK Exchequer as a result of the tax policies of the administrations of the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. However, in order to minimise tax lost, or at risk, the UK is committed to encouraging the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories to match international standards on exchange of information for tax purposes and on fair tax competition and welcomes progress that has been made so far.

The Government also remain determined to take necessary steps domestically to protect tax revenues and have, for example, introduced legislation to counter various offshore avoidance schemes, and are funding additional activity by the Inland Revenue aimed at tackling the exploitation of offshore trusts.

Pre-Budget Report Summary Leaflet

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many postal addresses in the UK have been sent *(a)* a copy and *(b)* multiple copies of the Pre-Budget Report Summary Leaflet, The Strength to Take the Long-Term Decisions: Seizing the Opportunities of the Global Recovery, of December; and what the total cost of postage was to his Department. [145443]

Ruth Kelly *[holding answer 5 January 2003]:* Individual copies of the 2003 Pre-Budget Report leaflet were distributed to around 4,000 addresses. Multiple copies were distributed to around 30,000 addresses. The costs of postage are included in the costs of distribution which I gave in an answer to the hon. Gentleman's Question 145445.

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total cost was of *(a)* printing and *(b)* distributing the Pre-Budget Report Summary Leaflet, The Strength to Take the Long-Term Decisions; Seizing the Opportunities of the Global Recovery. [145445]

Ruth Kelly *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The total printing cost for the 2003 Pre-Budget Report leaflets was around £75,000 and the distribution cost was approximately £110,000.

All costs have been met from within the Treasury's Departmental Expenditure Limits.

Red Diesel

Mr. Mike Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions there have been in each of the last five years for which there are records for *(a)* the production and *(b)* the use of red diesel on which duty has not been paid; what the amounts of duty involved were; and what penalties were imposed on those convicted. [145484]

John Healey: HM Customs and Excise's prosecution figures for Hydrocarbon Oil fraud over the past three years, including the number of convictions and the average sentence, are set out in their Annual Report (HC 52) published in December 2003. This also contains figures for the total value of fraud detected and identified.

In respect of prosecution figures for earlier years, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer the then Financial Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow Pollok (Mr. Davidson) on 30 January 2001, *Official Report*, column 142W. Prosecution figures cannot be broken down between those for the production of illicit fuel and those for its use, nor between those for frauds using different types of fuels.

Shared Appreciation Mortgages

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from householders who hold shared appreciation mortgages; and what plans he has to assist them. [145408]

Ruth Kelly: I have received a number of representations. I cannot intervene in individual cases nor can I direct firms to take action. But if individuals believe they have been mis-sold a product, they may have recourse to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Stakeholder Pensions

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will break down the figures for the take-up of stakeholder pensions released by the Inland Revenue by *(a)* earnings, *(b)* age and *(c)* gender. [146085]

Ruth Kelly: Estimates of the number of individuals contributing to Stakeholder Pensions in 2001–02, broken down by earnings, age and gender are contained in tables T7.10 and T7.11 of Inland Revenue Statistics. The latest versions of these are on the Inland Revenue website: http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats/pensions/03IR710.pdf http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats/pensions/03IR711.pdf

Tax Credits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in receipt of one or more tax credits *(a)* are paying and *(b)* are not paying income tax. [146741]

Dawn Primarolo: The final annual tax credit awards of families, and estimates of their 2003–04 income tax liabilities, will not be available until their awards are finalised on the basis of their actual incomes for 2003–04.

Tax Evasion

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures have been put in place

to reduce tax evasion since 1997; and what estimates have been made of additional sums collected as a result. [146328]

Dawn Primarolo: Activities designed to counter tax evasion are a normal and continuing part of the Inland Revenue's business. Important measures introduced since 1997 include the implementation of the—'Grabiner' recommendations; Proceeds of Crime Act; Savings Directive; Money Laundering provisions and Production Powers for use in criminal cases. Additionally, specifically funded compliance and enforcement packages have been put in place to tackle fraud and protect the Exchequer from non-payment of tax and other duties. In the 2003 Budget the Chancellor announced additional funding of £66 million over three years for such a package.

Typically, new measures to counter tax evasion are designed to work within the wider compliance regime and in concert with other measures. Consequently, often no meaningful estimates can be made of additional sums collected as a result of particular measures in isolation. Figures of total estimated additional liability flowing from the Inland Revenue's work tackling non-compliance are shown each year in their Annual Reports, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

UK-Produced Wine

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the UK levies applicable to UK-produced wine. [146472]

John Healey: UK excise duties applicable to wine are the same irrespective of the country in which the wine is produced. These are applied in bands according to the alcoholic strength of the product as shown in the following tables.

Most wine is produced in the 5.5 per cent. to 15 per cent. band.

	Rate per hectolitre (£)
Wine and made-wine	
Exceeding 1.2 per cent.—not exceeding 4 per cent. abv.	48.91
Exceeding 4 per cent.—not exceeding 5.5 per cent. abv.	67.25
Exceeding 5.5 per cent.—not exceeding 15 per cent. abv.	158.69
Exceeding 15 per cent.—not exceeding 22 per cent. abv.	211.58
Sparkling wine and made-wine	
Exceeding 5.5 per cent.—less than 8.5 per cent. abv.	166.70
8.5 per cent. and above—not exceeding 15 per cent. abv.	220.54

	Rate per litre of pure alcohol (£)
Wine and made-wine	
Exceeding 22 per cent. abv.	19.56

The final sale price of wine in the UK also includes VAT at the standard rate of 17.5 per cent.

Work/Benefits

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to ensure that people in work will be better off than if on benefits; what timetable he has set for increasing the number of people who are better off in work than if on benefits; and if he will make a statement. [146364]

Dawn Primarolo: The Government have improved gains to work by reducing the starting and basic rates of Income Tax, and reforming National Insurance Contributions. Recent increases in the National Minimum Wage, which was introduced in April 1999, have also significantly boosted the earnings of low paid workers.

Tax credits increase the gains to work for working families on low and moderate incomes. The new tax credits improve gains to work for part-time second earners and have extended financial support to many more working families on low and moderate incomes.

The Government's continuing commitment to making work pay is demonstrated by recent measures in the 2003 Budget and pre-Budget report.

TRANSPORT

Approved Driving Instructors

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses there were to the Driving Standards Agency's Consultation on Approved Driving Instructors qualifications; and what proportion of the responses came from *(a)* qualified driving instructors and *(b)* organisations representing them. [146454]

Mr. Jamieson: The Driving Standards Agency issued nearly 3,000 copies of its consultation paper in April 2003. The Agency received 82 responses including from national and local representative bodies for car driving instructors, organisations providing motorcycle training, representative bodies for the road freight and passenger transport industries, the police and those responsible for the administration of justice, road safety bodies, and individual instructors. Of the 82 responses, nine (11 per cent.) were from individual driving instructors and 11 (13 per cent.) from their representative bodies.

Bridge Strengthening Programme

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the new bridge management system will be operative; and what his latest estimate is of the cost of completing the bridge strengthening programme. [145543]

Mr. Jamieson: The information is as follows:

Bridge Management System

For motorways and trunk roads, the Highways Agency's Structures Management Information System (SMIS) first became operational in December 2000 and was networked to the Highways Agency's Consultant Agents' offices in May 2001.

For local roads, the Department for Transport has recently let a contract on behalf of the UK Bridges Board that will produce new advice for local authorities on the management of their bridge stock.

Bridge Strengthening Programme

The cost of the bridge strengthening programme for the motorways and trunk roads in England to meet the EU requirements to carry safely 38 and 40 tonne vehicles from January 1999 was £636 Million.

The cost of outstanding strengthening and major maintenance for local authority bridges in England was estimated in 2000 to be £750 million. This estimate is currently being revised.

British Airspace

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which airlines were banned from using British airspace between January 2000 and December 2003; between which dates in each case; and for what reasons; [146490]

(2) which airlines are banned from using British air space; and for what reasons. [146491]

Mr. McNulty: The UK has one of the most rigorous safety regimes in the world and plays a leading role in seeking to raise international safety standards.

Any airline from outside the EU or EEA which wishes to pick up or put down passengers or cargo in the UK requires a permit from the Secretary of State. It is a condition of the permit that the airline should be operated in accordance with international safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. If we have evidence that international standards are not being met a permit may be refused or revoked. Permits may also be refused for other reasons, such as non payment of fines for offences under immigration legislation.

Since 1 January 2000 a number of airlines have had applications for permits turned down, or would have had an application turned down if one had been received, because of failure to meet ICAO standards or other concerns. These are listed in the table as follows.

Airline	*Dates of permit restriction*	*Reason for restriction*
Aircraft operated by airlines from Equatorial Guinea	On-going	Inadequate safety regulation.
Aircraft operated by airlines from Gambia	On-going	Inadequate safety regulation.
Aircraft operated by airlines from Liberia	On-going	Inadequate safety regulation.
Aircraft operated by airlines from Tajikistan	On-going	Inadequate safety regulation.
Star Air Ltd. (Sierra Leone)	From October 2003	Adverse ramp inspection findings and concerns about inadequate safety regulation
RAF-AVIA (Latvia)	28 March to 26 July 2003	The airline was using a leased Ukraine registered aircraft but the lease agreement did not properly deal with the issue of operational control or regulatory oversight.
Enimex (Estonia)	25 February to 30 April 2003	The Estonian authorities had identified serious deficiencies with certain aspects of the airline operation but had permitted the airline to continue operating under a temporary Air Operator Certificate (AOC) while those deficiencies were addressed. Permits were refused until the full AOC was restored
Air Bosna (Bosnia)	April 2003	The Bosnian authorities had only issued a temporary AOC as the airline had an number of issues to rectify. Permits were refused until a full AOC was issued.
Inter Trans Air (Bulgaria)	August 2000	Adverse ramp inspection finding on an Antonov 12. Permits refused until corrective action taken.
Air Memphis (Egypt)	April 1999 to May 2002	Adverse ramp inspection findings. There was no response from the Egyptian authorities to the finding, and no further permit applications, until May 2002.
Cameroon Airlines	From January 2001	Non payment of Carriers Liability Act fines for transporting inadequately documented passengers.
Albanian Airlines	From January 2001	Concerns over security and immigration controls at Tirana.
Central Air Express (Democratic Republic of the Congo)	From February 2003	Inadequate safety regulation.
Air Universal (Sierra Leone)	From September 2003	Adverse ramp inspection findings and lack of response from Sierra Leone authorities.
Kyrgyzstan Airlines	Summer 2003	Non payment of Carriers Liability Act fines for transporting inadequately documented passengers.

In addition, we require permit applicants, where appropriate, to confirm that aircraft 2003 are equipped with certain equipment such as ground proximity warning systems and the airborne collision avoidance systems. Permit applications have been turned down in the absence of such confirmation.

All applications for a permit are considerd on their merits. The fact that an airline is not listed in the table does not mean that it would necessarily qualify for a permit.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [145994]

Mr. McNulty: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics web-site at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03 .pdf

As there are less than five members of the senior civil service in my department with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the "Code of Practice on Access to Government Information".

Driving Tests

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the average waiting time for a driving test; and if he will make a statement. [145331]

Mr. Jamieson: The average waiting time for a practical car test in November (the last month for which there is full data) was eight to seven weeks, against an annual national target of six weeks.

Figures for the rest of this financial year are:

Month	*Waiting time (weeks)*
April	8.8
May	9.4
June	9.3
July	9.8
August	11
September	10.1
October	9.5

During this period of high demand for practical driving tests the Driving Standards Agency, the executive agency of the Department responsible for conducting driving tests, received some 220 written representations about the waiting time.

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the cost of introducing compulsory hazard perception tests for existing approved driving instructors. [145335]

Mr. Jamieson: The consultation paper issued by the Driving Standards Agency in April 2003 contained a draft Regulatory Impact Assessment of the costs of introducing hazard perception testing into the standards supervision arrangements for existing approved driving instructors. The letter issued by the Agency in December that announced our decision contained an Assessment which had been amended in the light of consultation.

The direct costs to instructors who prepared thoroughly for the new assessment should be minimal. No fee will be charged for the first attempt at the test and training and information support have been supplied free. An instructor will have up to 12 months to take the test at a nationwide network of centres. An instructor who was unsuccessful on the first attempt would be charged £50 for a re-test.

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the responses to the consultation paper, "Driving Test Fees and Other Matters". [145336]

Mr. Jamieson: The Driving Standards Agency published a response to consultation letter on 5 December 2003. This summarised the 82 responses received. Copies of the letter were deposited in the House Libraries.

Where those who responded indicated that they had no objection to their response being made publicly available, the Agency will on request supply copies of individual responses.

M1 (Mill Hill)

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the closure of the access road to Gateway Services on the M1, from Ellesmere Avenue, Mill Hill. [146616]

Mr. Jamieson: The access road is not a public highway. It is temporarily closed during the installation of automatic barriers designed to restrict use to authorised users only. There has been excessive use of the access road by motorists taking a short cut through the service area to join the M1 and there have also been repeated incidents of fly-tipping.

Mersey Tunnel

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the date of the inquiry into the proposed increase in the Mersey Tunnel's toll will be announced. [146744]

Dr. Howells: The Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority and Executive (Merseytravel) has withdrawn its application for an Order to revise the Mersey Tunnels' tolls as it has been able to secure alternative funding to cover the initial cost of constructing emergency escape refuges/passageways in the Queensway (Liverpool/Birkenhead) Tunnel. As a consequence, an inquiry is no longer required.

Road Accidents

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to reduce the number and seriousness of incidents of motor vehicles striking railway bridges. [146220]

Mr. Jamieson: Many measures have been taken to prevent overheight vehicles striking bridges, including improved signing and conspicuity of low bridges, and regulations requiring that the vehicle's height be displayed in the cab. Despite these measures bridges continue to be struck. Such strikes can cause disruption to road and rail traffic, even for minor incidents, and a serious incident could cause injury and damage. The Department let a research contract last year to investigate the causes and possible prevention of bridge strikes, with the aim of identifying which available measures are likely to be worth pursuing so that drivers follow a route that is appropriate for their vehicle. My officials will be discussing the research findings and possible future steps with a wide range of stakeholders who meet with the Department in the Bridge Strike Prevention Group.

Measures to prevent vehicles from striking bridge parapets on roads over railways are being pursued as part of the general programme to manage the accidental incursion of the railway by road vehicles, following the accident at Great Heck, near Selby in February 2001 and the publication in February 2003 of the Department's report, "Managing the Accidental Obstruction of the Railway by Road Vehicles ".

Telecommunications Industry

John Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to consult Ofcom in connection with the impact on the telecommunications industry of the Traffic Management Bill; [146329]

(2) when the next meeting will be held of his Department's working group of representatives of highways authorities and utility companies; and whether Ofcom will be represented at the meeting. [146330]

Mr. Jamieson: During 2003, my Department hosted a series of meetings of the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC) Legislation Working Group, which was set up to consider possible measures for inclusion in the Traffic Management Bill. Those represented on the group included highway authorities and utilities, as well as the various utility regulators such as Oftel. The next meeting of the Group is on 15 January 2004 and those attending will include the new regulator body Ofcom. In drawing up the Bill we have looked closely at its possible impact upon the telecommunications industry and shall continue to do so as the Bill progresses through Parliament and as we draw up the secondary legislation which will be needed to implement some of the Bill's provisions. We will be involving Ofcom closely in this process.

Terrorism

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made by his Department of terrorist threats to civil aircraft in flight over Saudi Arabia. [145654]

Dr. Howells: The Government keep the threat to civil aviation in all countries, including Saudi Arabia, under continuous review.

Traffic Management Bill

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what the level of congestion on *(a)* inter-urban roads and *(b)* urban roads is against which he intends to achieve a reduction; and by how much he expects this to change when the measures in the Traffic Management Bill are implemented; [145531]

(2) what definition of congestion was used in the regulatory impact assessment for the Traffic Management Bill. [145548]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* For the detailed references to congestion in the RIA, calculations represent estimated time lost in seconds per kilometre travelled for different vehicle types compared with speeds obtained in periods of light traffic flow . In urban areas light flow speeds are usually speeds achieved at night time and would incorporate the effects of traffic signals, pedestrian crossings and other unavoidable constraints on vehicle movement.

In 2000, the average time lost per vehicle kilometres as a result of congestion was 24.8 seconds on roads in large urban areas and 3.2 seconds on strategic inter-urban roads.

The Highways Agency estimates that the introduction of Regional Control Centres and Traffic Officers will lead to a reduction in congestion on motorways of up to 5 per cent. We expect that measures outside of the scope of the Bill, such as additional capacity at key points on the strategic road network, many of which will be implemented alongside, will also lead to reductions in congestion on trunk roads.

The new duties and powers in the Bill provide an incentive and a means for local authorities to reduce congestion on their roads, and for utilities to work with less disruption, especially in urban areas. The level of reduction will depend on the local circumstances and the performance of individual utilities and authorities, including the use that the latter make of the new powers.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers of arrest will be available to traffic officers appointed under the Traffic Management Bill. [145538]

Mr. Jamieson: Traffic officers will not have powers of arrest.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he has spent on installing traffic calming measures in each of the last three years. [145826]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 7 January 2004]:* Installing traffic calming on local roads is the responsibility of the local highway authorities which fund them from block allocations provided by the Department in support of their Local Transport Plans or equivalents. The Department has, however, given local authorities grants totalling £4.6 million in 2002–03 and £5.5 million in 2003–04 for specific local transport schemes that include traffic calming measures.

Measures that may be described as traffic calming would generally form part of the Highways Agency's programme of small safety schemes on trunk roads. The Highways Agency's opening budgets for safety schemes over the last three years, as published in the Business Plan, are as follows: 2001–02—£47 million, 2002–03—£45 million and 2003–04—£41 million.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Fishing Industry

19. **Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she next intends to visit Scotland to meet representatives of the fishing industry to discuss the fishing industry in Scotland. [146387]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have no plans for further meetings at present, but would expect to discuss the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Report on the future of the fishing industry when it is published soon.

Mr. Alex Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she last met representatives of the Scottish fishing industry to discuss the fishing industry in Scotland. [146385]

Mr. Bradshaw: I met representatives of the Scottish industry at the Council of Ministers meeting last month.

Nuclear Decommissioning Agency

20. **Mr. Tynan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with ministerial colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry regarding the establishment of the nuclear decommissioning agency. [146389]

Mr. Morley: There are regular meetings and discussions between Ministers in the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and in the Department of Trade and Industry. These cover all issues of current mutual interest, including the establishment of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Toxic Waste Convention

21. **Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how the Government will implement the Stockholm convention on international trade in toxic waste; and what implications this has for such trade between industrialised nations. [146390]

Mr. Morley: The Stockholm Convention controls the production and use of 12 chemicals known as persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Controls on the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes are covered by a separate international agreement, the Basel Convention.

Current Community legislation covers most Party obligations under the Stockholm Convention, and the European Commission has proposed a Regulation on persistent organic pollutants to give effect to those provisions which are not sufficiently covered. The UK will ratify the Convention during 2004 when this proposed Regulation is in place.

The Stockholm Convention prevents the import or export of persistent organic pollutants unless for environmentally sound disposal or for a few exceptional uses. Most industrialised nations have already banned the use of the 12 chemicals listed so the impact on trade between them will be negligible.

Animal Welfare

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her policy is on introducing changes to the law concerning cruelty to animals. [146356]

Mr. Bradshaw: The department is currently undertaking a review of legislation relating to the welfare of captive and domestic animals with a view to introducing an Animal Welfare Bill. Any proposed changes to existing legislation will be based on science and good practice.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in her Department. [145993]

Alun Michael: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service website at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

The data shows that one per cent. of senior civil servants in my Department have a disability. As there are less than five members of the senior civil service in my Department with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on access to Government Information.

Flooding

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to purchase Geodesign Pallet Barriers to prevent flood damage in *(a)* the Vale of York and *(b)* elsewhere; and what assessment she has made of their effectiveness. [143879]

Mr. Morley: We have no plans to purchase such barriers. Purchase would be a matter for the operating authorities to decide.

The Environment Agency are currently trialling pallet barriers and other temporary, moveable defences on the River Severn. Once these trails are completed the Agency's assessment will be made available to other operating authorities. The usefulness of such moveable defences will be a matter for the Agency and local authorities to determine in light of local conditions.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which agency is responsible for ground water flooding. [146225]

Mr. Morley: No agency has direct responsibility for groundwater flooding and any remedial action would generally fall to the relevant landowner. The Environment Agency has powers to undertake works in relation to flooding from main rivers and the sea and also exercises a general supervisory duty over all flood defence matters. For ordinary watercourses these powers rest with local authorities and the internal drainage boards. However, the Environment Agency may, depending on the circumstances, be in a position to offer advice.

As part of the Department's on-going work to develop a new Government-wide strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management for England, a project is currently underway to scope the extent of groundwater flooding events and the present administrative arrangements.

Further information on the strategy is available via www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/policy/strategy.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what account planning authorities are required to take of the risk of ground water flooding; and whether planning permission can be refused in areas where ground water flooding is known to have occurred. [146226]

Keith Hill: I have been asked to reply.

Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 25 Development and flood risk advises that "the susceptibility of land to flooding is a material planning consideration". It advises the use of a risk-based approach based on a sequential test that gives priority to development in lower-risk zones.

PPG 25 advises specifically that the flood zones in its sequential test cover only river, tidal and coastal flooding but that locally an assessment may be needed of the risk of groundwater flooding in any of the zones. Such an assessment should be given appropriate weight alongside other material considerations by local planning authorities in determining applications. A high risk of groundwater flooding or failure to provide an assessment of flood risk that is appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and the risks involved can be reasons for refusal of permission.

Sudden Oak Death

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what action she is taking to prevent the importation of plant material that may act as a host to sudden oak death infection; and if she will make a statement. [146456]

Mr. Bradshaw: All plants entering the UK from third countries must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate and are subject to inspection at import. For a wide range of known hosts of the sudden oak death fungus (*Phytophthora ramorum* is its scientific name), specific measures must be followed before the authorities in the exporting country can issue the certificate. For trade within the EU, specific disease control measures are applied at the place of production to rhododendrons and viburnums, the two types of plant which have been most often found to be infected in Europe. Plant passports are then issued that travel with consignments allowing their free movement between member states.

Findings of *P ramorum* in imported and UK origin plants are of concern and inspections at UK nurseries and ports of entry are to be stepped up to ensure that all consignments of plants moved into and within the UK are free from *P ramorum* and meet plant passport requirements. Any consignment found to be infected, or not to have the correct documentation, will, as now, be destroyed. The UK will support extension of specific measures against *P ramorum* to additional types of plant when these are shown to present a significant risk.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what additional resources are being made available to the Plant Health Inspectorate in connection with sudden oak death; and if she will make a statement. [146457]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra's 75 Plant Health and Seeds Inspectors (PHSI) are already employed for around 20 per cent. of their time on inspection and surveillance duties related to Phytophthora ramorum, which is known in the USA as sudden oak death. However, in response to the increasing number of findings of this pathogen in England and Wales, the plant health service is to employ at least 20 additional staff to cover the increased rate of inspections at production nurseries, wild planting areas and ports of entry. This is part of a package of measures announced on 4 December. Wherever possible, suitably qualified field staff will be transferred from elsewhere in the Department. These will be supplemented by recruitment of a small number of staff with appropriate experience and qualifications (e.g. ex-PHSI staff). Transfer and recruitment will start in January.

Defra are also funding a substantial increase in sample diagnoses undertaken by the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) which is estimated to cost in excess of £750,000 to the end of 2004–05. CSL are also involved in on-going research into Phytophthora ramorum to the value of £370,000.

The Forestry Commission has redirected about 23 staff onto a woodland survey in England and Wales, to be completed by April 2004, which will help us to assess whether Phytophthora ramorum is present in the wider environment. Resource has also been redirected within the Forest Research Agency into projects designed to help us better understand the disease.

Road Signs/Markings

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what guidelines apply on the use of *(a)* road signs and *(b)* road markings in national parks. [145761]

Alun Michael: The national requirements for road signs and road markings are specified by the Department for Transport, principally in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 (SI 3113/02).

With the agreement of DfT, highways authorities may make limited modifications to meet any special local considerations such as those which might apply within a National Park.

US Vessels (Decommissioning)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the Environment Agency's handling of the ghost ships. [146368]

Mr. Morley: As the competent authority in England and Wales for the relevant controls, the Agency agreed in July to the import of the ships from the US for dismantling in Hartlepool. It became clear, however, that not all the required permissions for the dismantling facility were in place, and since the arrival of four of the ships in Hartlepool, the Agency has taken steps to prevent any dismantling work on them.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Public Appointments

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what recent assessment has been made of the participation of black and minority ethnic women in public life. [146257]

Jacqui Smith: The latest assessment (March 2001) showed minority ethnic women held only 2 per cent. of all national and regional public appointments. The Cabinet Office is developing a Public Bodies and Public Appointments database that will include information on diversity. This will underpin information that is held by individual Departments. To mark Black History Month in October 2003 my officials in the Women and Equality Unit produced a fact sheet, available on their website which gives more information about Minority Ethnic Women in Public Life.

Gender Budgeting

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on gender budgeting. [146250]

Jacqui Smith: I have had no specific discussions with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on gender budgeting, however I have jointly sponsored, with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, a pilot project on gender analysis of expenditure.

I believe gender analysis of expenditure can be an extremely useful tool in both policy development and evaluation. My officials in WEU have worked closely with HMT during the pilot project, with DTI being one of two Departments taking part. Lessons from this project will be used to inform further work in this area.

Occupational Segregation

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what assessment has been made of the contribution of occupational segregation to the skills gap. [146254]

Jacqui Smith: Within the recent Skills Strategy, 21st Century Skills, Realising our Potential, we have highlighted the challenge in making real improvements in raising the skills level of our workforce. We know that the majority of working women are concentrated in just five occupational groups which are often low paid and low skilled. For example 89 per cent. of hairdressers and beauticians are women and in a survey their average pay was found to be the second lowest of all occupations[1].

Some sectors identified as having significant skill weaknesses, such as Construction and Transport and Communications, have extreme occupational segregation. Only 9 per cent. of the workforce in Construction are women and 24 per cent. in Transport and Communications.

While we cannot entirely influence women's career choices, both the Skills Strategy and our recent Innovation Report identifies some of the levers to improve skills levels and for the UK to have a highly educated workforce with a culture of lifelong learning. To do this we have made a commitment to provide better information, advice and guidance on skills, training and qualifications so that people know what is available to them.

We have identified that our young people need to be properly prepared for the world of work. That is why we have commissioned a Working Group, chaired by Mike Tomlinson to advise on the development of more coherent vocational programmes for 14–19 year olds to ensure they have the necessary skills for employment and adult life. We want both girls and boys to make informed choices about their vocational routes and our Modern Apprenticeships will help support young people in their career choices and to improve their workplace skills, particularly at craft, supervisory and technician level.

Our Employer Training Pilots, introduced in September 2002, is designed to increase the demand for training by reducing barriers and providing training in more responsive ways. Over 20,000 learners and over 5,000 employers are now engaged. Trends show that overall there is a high proportion of female learners involved in pilots from all sectors, with a large majority concentrated in education and health and social work which is in line with the national average.

[1] *Source:*
Women's Incomes over the lifetime-WEU 1999.

Gender Pay Gap

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what steps are being taken to close the pay gap between men and women. [146258]

Jacqui Smith: The Government are taking forward a range of policies to tackle the gender pay gap. These include a new questionnaire procedure for use in equal pay cases, and measures to simplify and speed up equal pay tribunal procedures. The Government have led by example in committing all Civil Service departments and agencies to review their pay systems and produce action plans to close any equal pay gaps. The Government have provided funding for the EOC to develop equal pay tool kits so all organisations can carry out equal pay reviews. Measures to help parents maintain links with the world of work and better balance their work and home lives will contribute to a reduction of the pay gap. The Government also welcomes the EOC's investigation into modern apprenticeships and the concentration of men and women in different professions.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Correspondence

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what targets *(a)* her and *(b)* her Ministers' offices have for responding to constituency mail; and if she will set out the performance achieved in the last 12 months against these targets. [145603]

Mr. Caborn: The departmental target for responding to constituency mail (i.e. letters from hon. Members and the public) is 18 working days.

The figures for performance against target for the period 1 December 2002 to 1 December 2003 are as follows:

	Percentage answered within 18 working days
MPs cases	79
Members of the public	73

The Department produces regular statistics to monitor the performance on answering ministerial letters. These statistics are produced for review and discussion by the permanent secretary and the management board.

In addition, the Cabinet Office, on an annual basis, publishes a report to Parliament on performance of Departments in replying to ministerial correspondence. The report for 2002 was published on 15 May 2003. The report for 2003 will be published in due course.

Departmental Christmas Expenditure

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on the postage of Christmas cards *(a)* in the last year and *(b)* since 1997. [145596]

Mr. Caborn: No assessment of postage was made but the majority of cards were sent by second class post.

Digital Television

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many more analogue transmitters need to be converted to digital to achieve the same reach as the current analogue transmitters. [145617]

Estelle Morris: There are currently 1,154 transmitters in the UK; 80 of those, including all the main stations, are able to transmit both analogue and digital signals. It is estimated that around 1,150 transmitters would be necessary to reach, on switchover, the same level of coverage by digital terrestrial television as previously with the current analogue transmitters.

Millennium Commission

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much the Millennium Commission contributed to Bradford Cathedral's Life Force Exhibition; what checks were carried out on the exhibition's financial viability before the grant was given; who carried out the financial viability study; how many visitors the exhibition expected to attract; how many attended; what plans she has to change the procedures for financial scrutiny of Lottery grant applications; and if she will make a statement. [146234]

Tessa Jowell: As detailed issues relating to Lottery funding of Bradford Cathedral's Life Force Exhibition are primarily for the Millennium Commission, I will write to my hon. Friend in my capacity as Chair of the Commission, and place copies of my reply in the Libraries of both Houses.

On the more general matter of scrutiny of Lottery grant applications, Lottery distributing bodies' financial directions already require them to have clearly developed policies and procedures for the financial, and, where appropriate, economic appraisal of projects, of which risk assessment should be an important part, and to assess applications in accordance with those procedures. Revisions to the financial directions being discussed with distributing bodies will further strengthen these requirements to focus more directly on risk assessment.

Police Merger

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport whether she expects that the merger between the Metropolitan Police Service and the Royal Parks Constabulary will be completed in April 2004; and if she will make a statement. [144900]

Mr. Caborn *[holding answer 6 January 2004]:* Merger of the two police forces will require primary legislation which will be introduced at the earliest opportunity but will not be in place by 1 April 2004. The Department is working closely with the Metropolitan Police Service to ensure that effective policing of the Royal Parks is maintained until Parliament has approved the merger proposals.

Television Subtitling

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps the Government are taking to encourage an increase in the provision of subtitling on television. [145580]

Estelle Morris: The Communications Act 2003 has strengthened the requirements for subtitling on television. The Act sets subtitling targets of 90 per cent. of programmes on Channels 3 and 4, and 80 per cent. of programmes on all other channels, by the tenth anniversary of the start of the service. The Act also introduces a fixed, five-year interim target of 60 per cent. for subtitling, to accelerate progress during the early years. Under the Act, these requirements have been extended to digital cable and satellite broadcasters for the first time.

Tourism

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much funding *(a)* VisitBritain, *(b)* the Scottish Tourist Office and *(c)* the Welsh Tourist Office will receive in 2003–04. [145588]

Mr. Caborn: For 2003–04, VisitBritain has been allocated £45.9 million in baseline grant-in-aid by my Department, VisitScotland has been allocated £29.1 million in baseline grant in aid by the Scottish Executive and the Wales Tourist Board has been allocated £22.2 million in baseline grant in aid by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much of VisitBritain's funding is spent solely on English tourism. [145589]

Mr. Caborn: £10.4 million is available to VisitBritain in 2003–04 for the domestic marketing of England. £35.5 million is available in 2003–04 for the overseas promotion of Britain (including England) as a tourist destination.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Development Agencies

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures are in place to ensure that regional development agencies share best practice. [146079]

Jacqui Smith: The Government believe that much added value can be gained from Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) sharing best practice. One of the measures of RDA performance is an assessment of how effective each RDA has been in working with other RDAs across regional boundaries and sharing innovation and best practice with each other.

Examples of the sharing of best practice include regular meetings between RDA Chairs. In addition, the RDAs nominated as "in the lead" for particular issues

are also important catalysts for sharing best practice. These lead RDAs establish new networks of contacts on particular subjects that enable the efficient sharing of information.

British Energy

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much additional funding she intends to make available to British Energy as part of the credit facility to the company outlined in her written statement of 14 October; and if she will make a statement. [141540]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 2 December 2003]:* I refer the hon. Member to the written statement made my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 1 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 50–51WS.

Consumer Credit

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether she intends to bring forward primary legislation to tackle loan sharks, as outlined in the White Paper, "Fair, Clear and Competitive: A Consumer Credit Market for the 21st Century". [146144]

Mr. Sutcliffe: My Department is bringing forward a package of legislative proposals—requiring both primary and secondary legislation—to reform the consumer credit market in the UK. Tackling loan sharks is a key part of this package. We have announced a project concerned with hunting loan sharks, though this relies on existing legislative provision. Primary legislation will be used to address the licensing regime for consumer credit providers; time orders; unfair credit transactions and the provision of alternative dispute resolution for consumer credit disputes. Legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Cross-border Mergers

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact that the 10th Company Law Directive on cross-border mergers will have on management of United Kingdom companies. [146148]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Commission proposal for a 10th Company Law Directive on cross-border mergers was published on 18 November 2003. My officials met City and business representatives and had other informal contacts with interested parties during December in order to assess the likely impact of the Directive on UK companies, including as regards their management.

On the basis of these discussions, and internal departmental consideration, an initial Regulatory Impact Assessment on the anticipated costs and benefits of the Commission proposal was prepared alongside the Explanatory Memorandum (15330S/03) submitted to the Parliamentary Scrutiny Committees on 15 December 2003 and is available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Employment Relations

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effect of the 8-week rule on *(a)* employers and *(b)* employees; and if she will make it her policy to abolish it. [146177]

Mr. Sutcliffe: During the recent review of the Employment Relations Act 1999, the Government looked closely at the operation of protections from dismissal for employees taking lawfully organised official industrial action. The conclusion of that review, as set out in the response to consultation published last month, is that the 8-week rule should be retained and that the Employment Relations Bill will introduce improvements to the existing protections. These changes are designed to ensure, firstly, that days where employees are 'locked-out' during official industrial action are disregarded in calculating the 8-week period; and secondly that the procedural steps employers and employees must take under the statute to attempt to resolve a dispute are clear.

Information and Communications Technology

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the proportion of employees in the UK information and communication technology sector who are *(a)* nationals of countries outside the UK and *(b)* nationals of countries outside the EU. [146136]

Mr. Timms: The information is not available.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people have been employed in the information and communication technology sector in each year since 1997. [146137]

Mr. Timms: The figures for the UK, in thousands, are as follows; the latest year for which information is available is 2001.

	Number (Thousand)
1997	n/a
1998	1,216
1999	1,291
2000	1,376
2001	1,420

n/a = Not available.
Source:
National Statistics (Annual Business Inquiry).

Internet Usage

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact that a lack of trust in security has on use of the internet in the UK. [146139]

Mr. Timms: We have long known that users' trust and confidence in the internet would impact on its uptake. This was recognised in the September 1999 report from the Performance and Innovation Unit, "e-commerce@its.best.uk" which identified trust as one of the three pillars which would support the adoption of the internet in the UK. Studies into consumer behaviour in 2001 and 2002 ("Informing Consumers About e-commerce" and "Internet and Cross Border Shopping") showed that the perception of credit card

fraud was a significant concern to on-line consumers. That said, on-line shopping represented 6 per cent. of all UK retail in 2002, and was set to grow to £14 billion in 2003 as part of a continuing growth in use of the internet throughout the economy. Our latest study—the "International Benchmarking Study" published by DTI in November 2003—showed that the impact of a lack of confidence on internet usage appears to be receding. It was also noted that security and trust were seen as less of a barrier to internet usage by UK business than was the case in previous benchmarking studies.

Post Offices

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many post offices there were in each constituency *(a)* in 1997 and *(b)* currently; and how many of them transact more than 40 per cent. of their work volumes on behalf of the Benefits Agency. [146544]

Mr. Timms: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 9 January 2003, *Official Report*, column 299W.

Public Sector Contracts

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will take steps to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises have the same opportunities to compete for contracts for public sector user-framework agreements as larger firms; and if she will make a statement. [145407]

Nigel Griffiths: The Government are working to encourage small firms to secure public sector contracts.

This includes implementing the recommendations of a recent Better Regulation Task Force/Small Business Council report, which made a number of recommendations to improve SMEs ability to compete against large companies for contracts.

Private Hire Vehicles

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the cost was of producing the report, "The Regulation of Licensed Taxi and PHV Services in the UK", OFT 676; and when she expects to respond to its recommendations. [145821]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The cost of producing the report is a matter for the Chairman of the OFT—I have asked him to write to the hon. Member directly. My right hon. Friend will respond to the report and its recommendations within 120 days (by 9 March 2004).

Veterinary Medicines

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether she has performed an impact assessment to determine what percentage of veterinary surgeons would be adversely affected by the recommendations contained within the Competition Commission report into prescription only veterinary medicines; [146093]

(2) what assessment she has made of the likely effect of the implementation of the recommendations of the Competition Commission's report on prescription only veterinary medicines on levels of veterinary care for pets of low income owners; [146100]

(3) what discussions she has had with veterinary organisations regarding the recommendations of the Competition Commission's report on prescription only veterinary medicines; and what assessment she has made of their representations; [146101]

(4) how many complaints were received by the Office of Fair Trading about the price of prescription only veterinary medicines in each of the last five years for which records are available; and what proportion of those complaints were made about *(a)* large animals practices and *(b)* small animal practices; [146102]

(5) what the average profit per veterinary practice was in each of the last five years for which figures are available; [146095]

(6) what the average profit per veterinary practice was on the sale of prescription-only medicines in *(a)* large animal practices and *(b)* small animal practices in each of the last five years for which figures are available; [146096]

(7) when she expects to publish a Statutory Instrument to implement the recommendations of the Competition Commissions Report into prescription only veterinary medicines; [146097]

(8) what estimate she has made of the impact on the average cost of a veterinary consultation of implementation of the recommendations made by the Competition Commission in its report on prescription only veterinary medicines; [146098]

(9) what discussions she has had with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons regarding changes to its Guide to Professional Conduct, with reference to the Competition Commission's recommendations on prescription only medicines. [146106]

Mr. Sutcliffe: In recent months, I and members of my Department, have had several meetings with representatives of the RCVS, the BVA and other professional bodies. We have listened carefully to the views of the profession particularly in relation to animal health and welfare. These discussions have been helpful and productive and identified opportunities to reduce the potential need for legislation by addressing many of Competition Commission recommendations within the industry's own professional code of practice.

A consultation document together with a draft impact assessment and the draft legislation we consider is necessary to implement these recommendations is currently being finalised in discussion with DEFRA. This will be issued shortly and will provide all interested parties with a further opportunity to comment on how best to carry forward the Commission's recommendations. Reflecting the Government's better regulation agenda, the DTI would look closely at proposals from the profession to take forward some or all of them within the industry's own professional rules.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Elder Abuse

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people over the age of 60 were victims of *(a)* attacks and *(b)* abuse in England and Wales in each year since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [145629]

Ms Blears: The most recent information available on violent crime victimisation of people over the age of 60 is from the 2000 British Crime Survey, which measures crime in 1999 (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 08/02, Chivite-Matthews and Maggs, 2002). This showed that 0.9 per cent. of women aged 60 and over and 1.1 per cent. of men in this age group were victims of at least one incident of violence in England and Wales that year. There were approximately 132,000 incidents of violence against older people in 1999, however some people may have experienced more than one incident in the year. People aged 60 and over had a lower risk of experiencing violent crime than other age groups, and were also less likely to be repeatedly victimised.

More recent figures are available for those aged 65 or over. In 2001–02, 0.7 per cent of men aged 65 to 74 and 0.7 per cent. of women in this age group experienced one or more violent incidents, while 0.6 per cent. of men aged 75 and over and 0.5 per cent. of women aged 75 and over did so. In 2002–03, 1.3 per cent of men and 0.7 per cent. of women aged 65 to 74 and 0.4 per cent of men and 0.6 per cent. of women aged 75 and over were victims of a violent crime (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 07/03, Simmons and Dodd, 2003).

The statistics do not make a distinction between attacks and abuse.

Alcohol

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which areas the alcohol harm reduction strategy will be implemented. [146313]

Ms Blears: The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit published an interim analytical report on the harms associated with alcohol misuse on 19 September 2003. This report identifies the following broad areas of policy intervention: education, information and communication; supply and pricing; health and treatment services; and community safety and criminal justice. The findings of this report will be used to inform development of the Government's alcohol harm reduction strategy, which will cover all areas of England.

Departmental Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many security passes have been reported lost or stolen by staff in his Department in the last 12 months. [144268]

Fiona Mactaggart: The total number of Home Office Security Passes reported lost or stolen on the London and Croydon Estates for the 12 months ending 11 December 2003 was 291; for London 162, for Croydon 129.

The loss of these passes is a nuisance rather than a threat. They do not show that they provide access to the Home Office. They all have a photograph which enables the security guards and others to challenge a person other than the rightful holder. The passes for the central London estate are de-activated as soon as they are reported missing, so that they cannot be used to gain entry through revolving/circle lock doors.

Disabled Civil Servants

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144978]

Fiona Mactaggart: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics website at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

This information is also available in the Libraries of the House. The latest statistics show that in my Department there are no senior civil servants with a disability.

The Department is concerned that there are no known disabled staff in the Senior Civil Service (SCS) and we are implementing an action programme to address the position.

There are significant numbers of staff with disability at junior and middle management levels and this should lead eventually in to senior levels. Reasonable adjustments are provided at promotion and selection boards for disabled candidates and we operate a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled staff who meet minimum requirements for vacancies.

Fear of Crime

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the level of public fear of crime. [146272]

Ms Blears: The latest published statistics from the British Crime Survey, the quarterly update to June 2003, report that levels of fear of crime in the key categories of burglary, vehicle and violent crime have fallen, compared to June 2002. 14 per cent. of adults had high levels of worry about burglary (compared with 15 per cent. in June 2002), 16 per cent. had high levels of worry about vehicle crime (compared with 18 per cent.) and 20 per cent. had high levels of worry about violent crime (compared with 21 per cent.).

Firearm Offences

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the change in the number of firearm offences since March 2001. [146267]

Caroline Flint: Home Office figures indicate that, in 2001–02, firearms offences (excluding those involving air weapons) increased by 35 per cent. from the previous year. Provisional figures released on 16 October 2003

show a total number of firearms offences in England and Wales in 2002–03 (excluding air weapons) was around 10,250 or around 3 per cent. higher than in 2001–02.

The overall level of firearms offences as a proportion of all recorded crime remains steady, at less than half of one 1 per cent.

In 2001–02, there were 95 recorded incidents in which injury following a firearms offence proved fatal. Provisional figures show that this figure fell by 16 per cent. in 2002–03. Final figures for 2002–03 will be published soon.

This remains an appalling loss of life on our streets and in our communities and we are continuing a programme of action covering community engagement, enforcement, legislation and tackling the links to drug supply and crime to deal with it.

Graffiti

Ann Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to reduce the level of graffiti. [146320]

Ms Blears: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduces a package of measures to prevent graffiti and to ensure that it is removed swiftly when it does occur.

The Act will give local authorities new powers to clean graffiti from certain types of property, including cable boxes, post boxes, phone booths, and property associated with public transport. It will also contain proposals to restrict the sale of spray paints to under 16s and give Local Authorities the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for graffiti. This means offenders will have to pay a £50 penalty or be prosecuted through the courts.

In November we launched the Name that Tag poster campaign which offers a £500 reward for information about targeted prolific taggers. This campaign is a partnership between the Home Office, Crimestoppers, Network Rail London Underground and British Transport Police and runs in London, Liverpool and Manchester.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* crimes were committed by, and *(b)* cautions were issued to, juvenile offenders in (i) St Helens, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) the North West in each year since 1992. [144323]

Paul Goggins: The table gives the number of juveniles convicted of all offences in St. Helens, Merseyside and the North West Region, 1992 to 2002. It also shows those given cautions (reprimands and final warnings from June 2000) in Merseyside and the North West during this period.

The information collected centrally does not enable cautions in St. Helens to be separately identified. Neither is it possible to give the number of crimes committed by juveniles, only the number of juveniles who are found guilty of all offences.

Statistics for 2003 will be published in the Autumn of 2004.

Number of juveniles found guilty at all courts of all offences and number given cautions, North West region, 1992 to 2002

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
St. Helens						
Persons aged 10–17 found guilty	270	216	240	219	227	227
Persons aged 10–17 receiving a caution[1]	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Merseyside police force area (including St. Helens)						
Persons aged 10–17 found guilty	2,510	2,112	2,260	2,478	2,889	2,789
Persons aged 10–17 receiving a caution[1]	4,602	3,748	3,209	2,495	2,693	3,569
North West region (including Merseyside)[2]						
Persons aged 10–17 found guilty	11,912	9,784	10,810	19,461	12,644	13,127
Persons aged 10–17 receiving a caution[1]	22,676	19,110	11,635	17,708	18,446	16,581

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
St. Helens					
Persons aged 10–17 found guilty	224	373	373	408	346
Persons aged 10–17 receiving a caution[1]	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Merseyside police force area (including St. Helens)					
Persons aged 10–17 found guilty	2,780	2,613	3,096	3,142	3,029
Persons aged 10–17 receiving a caution[1]	3,909	3,554	2,177	1,498	1,793
North West region (including Merseyside)[2]					
Persons aged 10–17 found guilty	13,866	14,389	16,032	16,455	16,209
Persons aged 10–17 receiving a caution[1]	19,026	16,328	12,501	11,966	9,750

[1] Cautions for persons under 18 were replaced by reprimands and final warnings from June 2000.

[2] Includes police force areas of Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside.

[3] not available.

Motor Vehicle Theft

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* thefts of motor vehicles and *(b)* thefts from motor vehicles occurred in each of the last five years; and what proportion of each were committed after a window was broken. [145533]

Ms Blears: Estimates from British Crime Surveys (BCS) are set out in the table. In 1998 and 2000 BCS respondents were asked about their experiences of crime in the previous calendar year. Following a change in the BCS sample design, from 2001–02 onwards respondents were asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview.

	1998	*2000*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*
Total thefts of /thefts from motor vehicle (Number)	2,527,000	2,135,000	1,806,000	1,703,000
Of which:				
Thefts of a motor vehicle (Number)	370,000	328,000	315,000	278,000
Offender broke window/tried to (Percentage)	16	13	17	Not yet available
Thefts from a motor vehicle (Number)	2,157,000	1,807,000	1,491,000	1,425,000
Offender broke window/tried to (Percentage)	49	47	45	Not yet available

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will include in the next edition of the booklet "Steer Clear of Car Crime" a reference to the retro-fitting of security film to motor vehicle windows; [145534]

(2) pursuant to his answer of 3 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 71W, on vehicle crime, whether the retro-fitting of security film to motor vehicle windows is recognised by his Department as a means of improving vehicle permitted security. [145616]

Ms Blears: We recognise that the retro-fitting of security film to motor vehicle windows has the potential to improve vehicle perimeter security. We will raise motorists' awareness of security film through Government publicity material, including the booklet "Steer Clear of Car Crime", when we are satisfied that products are available that meet Home Office attack resistance requirements and the appropriate standards set out in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, Directive 92/22/EEC and UN/ECE Regulation 43 to ensure safety and durability.

Police

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made of the response of the police to the Getting the Best Leaders to Take on the Most Demanding Challenges project. [146276]

Ms Blears: An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken on the key findings contained in the project on "Getting the Best Leaders to Take on the Most Demanding Challenges". A number of regional seminars were held to discuss the key findings with those who would be most affected by any new policies arising from the project report. Approximately 320 people, representing the broad spectrum of the police service attended the seminars and over 100 written responses were also received. The results of the consultation exercise were considered by the Police Leadership Development Board (PLDB) on which all the major stakeholders, including all the police associations and the Association of Police Authorities are represented.

These responses and the views of the PLDB informed the advice given to Ministers and subsequent decisions on the future direction of policy.

As a result we are taking forward a number of measures to improve the identification, selection, support and development of those with the potential to be chief officers, including establishing a central advisory service which will be an embryonic form of a new body, the Police Leadership Centre, which will bring together all central work on police leadership within the remit of one organisation.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the pay and conditions package for the police implemented from 1 April 2003. [146277]

Ms Blears: The package provides improved and modernised pay and conditions of service for the police. It has a number of elements that are important for the wider police reform agenda including modernising the pay system, enabling greater flexibility and targeting rewards for priority work. I am pleased that all parties to the Police Negotiating Board agreement that led to the package are now working to ensure its effective implementation.

Mr. Chaytor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list, for each police force in England and Wales, the total number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female police officers in post for each of the last 10 years; [142057]

(2) if he will list, for each police force in England and Wales, the total number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female (i) CID and (ii) non-CID officers in post at each rank, for each of the last 10 years. [142058]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 16 December 2003]:* Available information covers the period 1996 to 2003 for gender and rank. In 2003 new calculations for counting police numbers were introduced so the figures are not comparable with previous years.

A copy of the statistics have been placed in the Library.

Proceeds of Crime

Jim Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the Answer of 11th December, *Official Report*, column 621W, whether the net proceeds were £6,635,335; and to whom this money was distributed. [145956]

Caroline Flint: The net proceeds were £602,195, which is the value of cash forfeited by the Metropolitan Police Service (MRS) under the new powers in the Act. The money was remitted to the Consolidated Fund. The sum of £7,237,530 given in my earlier reply represented the total amount of cash seized by the Metropolitan Police. Cash seized can only be forfeited and paid into the Consolidated Fund after a forfeiture order is made by a magistrates' court.

US Bases

Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the agreement with the US on bases on UK territory says about the holding of prisoners other than US Service personnel. [145787]

Mr. Ingram: I have been asked to reply.

There is no specific agreement regarding the holding of prisoners. However, the terms of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) 1951 state that the military authorities of the sending state only have jurisdiction over persons who are subject to the military law of that state.

DEFENCE

Iraq

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq will be deemed to have been completed. [146184]

Mr. Hoon: The search for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is the responsibility of the Iraq Survey Group. Once the ISG has made its final recommendations concerning the state of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes it will be for governments to decide what, if any, further action is required.

Legacy Project Study

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will respond to the correspondence to his Department containing the Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Trust's Legacy Project study. [144454]

Mr. Caplin: The Ministry of Defence was consulted at official level when the study was under way. The Department subsequently received a copy of the Legacy Project's report following its launch on 5 November 2003. The Report and its recommendations are now being studied. Officials have already made informal contact with the Legacy Project and look forward to discussing the Report in the near future.

A number of my Ministerial colleagues have received letters about the Report and responses are now being prepared.

Medical Supplies Agency

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation he has made of *(a)* the Medical Supplies Agency as a whole and *(b)* the specific operational capabilities of medical distribution centres. [145349]

Mr. Caplin: The Medical Supplies Agency (MSA) is subject to several formal mechanisms of ministerial and other evaluation. The Agency Annual Report and Financial Accounts is presented to the House of Commons pursuant to Section 7 of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000. The latest Report was ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 16 July 2003 and a copy was placed in the Library of the House on 17 November 2003. In addition to the financial statements, with a certificate by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Report covers a review of activity, an assessment of performance against agreed key targets and a statement on future strategy. The financial statement is also subject to interim audit by the National Audit Office.

The principal means by which Ministers can evaluate the MSA, and its Medical Distribution Centres, is through the Key Target process. This involves the agreement with Ministers of wide-ranging performance targets for the MSA. Achievement against these targets is then closely monitored and reported to Ministers, through the Director General Management and Organisation, and shown in the Agency Annual Report and Financial Accounts.

Naval Courts Martial

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the case of Grieves *v.* the United Kingdom; what effects he anticipates this will have on naval courts martial; and what further legislation he anticipates will be necessary to protect service law from challenges from the European Court of Human Rights. [145958]

Mr. Caplin: I refer the hon. Member to my Written Ministerial Statement of 6 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 5–6WS.

Reservists

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many reservists lost their civilian jobs as a result of serving in the armed forces, in each of the last five years; how many filed claims for compensation; what the average time taken to settle each case was; how much was received by each of the claimants, net of legal expenses; and if he will make a statement. [146178]

Mr. Caplin: There is no requirement for reservists to provide the information requested to the Ministry of Defence. There is, therefore, no comprehensive record of the numbers of reservists who may have lost their civilian jobs as a result of service in the armed forces. However, protection is provided by reinstatement under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985. Over 8,600 reservists were called-out to support Operation TELIC and we are aware of only 11 individuals who needed to bring a case under the 1985 Act. This continues to show the high level of support from both reservists and employers which the Government is pleased to acknowledge.

Territorial Army

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Territorial Army doctors are serving in the Gulf. [145767]

Mr. Caplin: Eleven.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Andrew Smith

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to his answer of 9 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 830W, what contracts his Department entered into prior to the last 12 months with *(a)* Avient Air and *(b)* other companies in which Mr. Andrew Smith has an interest; what services were provided to his Department under these contracts; what the value of these contracts was; when these contracts were entered into; and if he will make a statement. [146418]

Hilary Benn: We had no contracts with Avient Air. As far as my Department is aware, we had none with any other companies in which Mr. Smith has an interest.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [146006]

Hilary Benn: Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics website at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf

As there are less than five members of the senior civil service in my department with a disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

DFID's target for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts is 3.3 per cent.

HIV/AIDS (Africa)

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what action he will take to increase access to anti-retro viral drugs for HIV positive people in the African pandemic area. [145160]

Hilary Benn: DFID is committed to working with others, including our donor partners, the pharmaceutical industry, investors, developing country governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve access to medicines in developing countries, including for the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

With the World Health Organisation, DFID believes that affordable pricing, sustainable financing, reliable health and supply systems, and the rational selection and use of existing drugs are all essential to improve access to medicines.

In line with this, DFID has committed over £1.5 billion since May 1997 to support the strengthening of health and supply systems in developing countries, which will help to build capacity to deliver medicines to the poor and to make effective choices about the selection of drugs. The UK has also pledged $280 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM). This will help strengthen health system capacity to deliver effective and affordable prevention, treatment, care and support programmes, based on locally determined needs and building upon countries own national priorities. According to UNAIDS, the UK is the second largest bilateral donor for HIV/AIDS programmes.

DFID supports a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS, which includes prevention, treatment and care and alleviation of the impact of AIDS. We welcome recent reductions in the price of both patent and generic anti-retroviral drugs for the treatment of HIV. These reductions have created new opportunities to allow poor people to benefit from the same life-saving treatment that has been available in affluent countries. We will continue to work with the WHO, the patent based and generic pharmaceutical industries and others to further reduce prices. DFID supports the target set by the World Health Organisation and UNAIDS for three million people receiving treatment by the end of 2005. A new policy on treatment and care, to be launched early next year, will set out how DFID will co-ordinate work with partners to promote anti-retroviral treatment for poor people and for women.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Asbestos

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have died from asbestos-related diseases in London in each year since 1990; and what estimates his Department has made of the number of likely deaths in future years. [146087]

Mr. Browne: The numbers of deaths each year from 1990 in the Government Office Region of London due to mesothelioma, and deaths where the deceased had asbestosis are given in the following table. In addition, it is estimated that for each mesothelioma there are one to two lung cancer deaths due to asbestos.

Deaths from mesothelioma and asbestosis in London, 1990–2001

	Mesothelioma	*Asbestosis (without mesothelioma or lung cancer)*
1990	116	16
1991	109	32
1992	116	14
1993	140	14
1994	135	14
1995	138	12
1996	137	25
1997	157	14
1998	150	9
1999	158	12
2000	[1]161	12
2001	[1]175	13

[1] Provisional.

Source:
HSE mesothelioma and asbestosis registers.

Statistical modelling has been used to estimate the future peak number of mesothelioma deaths in Great Britain. Predictions of future deaths are not available for the London region. The annual total number of mesothelioma deaths in Great Britain is expected to peak at around 1,950 to 2,450 deaths some time between 2011 and 2015. (The total number of mesothelioma deaths in Great Britian in 2001 was 1,848; the 175 mesothelioma deaths in London in 2001 represent 9.5 per cent. of this total). It is estimated that the ratio of one to two of the number of asbestos-related lung cancers to the number of mesotheliomas will decrease slightly over time. No estimates have been made of the likely deaths in future years due to asbestosis.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of attendance allowance awards were allocated to each disability group as defined by the Department *(a)* since the new pack was introduced in October 2003 and *(b)* under the previous system. [146740]

Mr. Pond: Information on the proportion of attendance allowance awards allocated to each disability group as defined by the Department is obtained from quarterly extracts from the attendance allowance computer system. The last quarterly extract covered the quarter ending 31 August 2003.

New attendance allowance awards by medical condition during the quarter ending 31 August 2003

	Thousand
All	84.8
Other unspecified mainly terminally ill	10.5
Arthritis	18.1
Spondylosis	0.6
Back pain—not specified	0.6
Disease of the muscles, bones or joints	3.9
Trauma to limbs	0.6
Blindness	2.5
Deafness	[1]0.1
Heart disease	7.5
Chest disease	3.9
Asthma	0.8
Cerebrovascular disease	5.1
Peripheral vascular disease	0.6
Frailty	14.3
Epilepsy	[1]0.2
Neurological diseases	0.9
Multiple sclerosis	[1]0.1
Parkinsons disease	1.8
Motor Neuron disease	[1]0.1
Chronic fatigue syndromes	—
Diabetes mellitus	1.6
Traumatic paraplegia/tetraplegia	—
Major trauma other than traumatic paraplegia tetraplegia	[1]0.1
Mental subnormality	—
Psychosis	[1]0.4
Psychoneurosis	0.7
Dementia	7.3
Behavioural disorder	—
Alcohol abuse	[1]0.1
Renal disorders	[1]0.2
Inflammatory bowel disease	[1]0.1
Bowel and stomach disease	[1]0.3
Blood disorders	[1]0.3
Multi system disorders	—
Skin disease	—
Malignant disease	1.7
Haemodialysis	—

[1] Figures are less than 500 and subject to a high degree of sampling variation.

Notes:

1. Figures are in thousands and rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. '—' denotes nil or negligible.
3. From November 2002, the methodology for producing these figures was changed to allow statistics to be published much sooner. This has resulted in a small increase in the reported caseload. This is because some cases which have actually terminated but have not yet been updated on the computer system are now included.
4. Figures represent decisions made on new attendance allowance claims only during this period.

Source:

IAD Information Centre. 5 per cent. sample.

The data for the quarter ending 30 November 2003 will not be available until late February 2004. The next publication relating to November 2003 will be released on 17 March 2003. The delay between data collection and publication is because the information centre must quality assure the data, produce standard tables and make a dataset available for further ad hoc analysis.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of attendance allowance claims, processed since the new claim pack was introduced in October 2003, have been subject to appeal. [146742]

Mr. Pond: The following information shows the number of decisions made on new attendance allowance claims in the months of October and November 2003 and the number of attendance allowance appeals registered in the same months. Decisions appealed in October and November will contain a mix of claims made on the old and new forms. No separate data is available.

	October 2003	*November 2003*
Decisions made	35,111	30,957
Appeals registered	1,213	1,120
Percentage	3.45	3.61

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of attendance allowance claimants have been contacted by telephone to discuss their claim since the new claim pack was introduced in October 2003. [146743]

Mr. Pond: Statistics on the number of telephone calls made to attendance allowance customers to discuss their claim are not routinely collected.

Capability Reports

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the piloting of capability reports for personal advisers in jobcentres; and if he will make a statement. [146623]

Mr. Browne: Since 2000, the Department has been piloting the use of capability reports by personal advisers conducting work-focused interviews with customers claiming incapacity benefit. The Department commissioned research to assess the effectiveness of this capability report in supporting personal advisers and has undertaken additional in-house evaluation.

Research undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research for the Department for Work and Pensions was published in 2002 ("Evaluation of the Capability Report: Identifying the work-related capabilities of incapacity benefit", WP Research report 162), copies of which are in the Library.

In taking forward findings from this evaluation, a range of activities were put in place to improve the use and effectiveness of the capability reports, including improving training for advisers and piloting a shorter version.

Formal piloting of the clerical capability reports ended in March 2003; this work has informed the development of an electronic version of the report. The new incapacity benefit pilots will include an evaluation of the role of this new capability report.

Child Support (Army Personnel)

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of army personnel who are required to pay child support were in default with payments in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [145675]

Mr. Pond: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the Chief Executive, Mr. Doug Smith. He will write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Letter from Doug Smith to Mr. Peter Duncan, dated 8 January 2004:

In reply to your recent Parliamentary question about the Child Support Agency the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Chief Executive.

You asked what percentage of army personnel who are required to pay child support were in default with payments in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

The Agency does have some relevant information about personnel in Her Majesty's Forces but does not distinguish those in the army. The percentage of fully assessed Child Support Agency cases, where the non-resident parent is in Her Majesty's Forces and has some outstanding arrear, is estimated in the table below:

	% with an arrear
1999	62
2000	57
2001	57
2002	56
2003	63

I hope this is helpful.

Disabled Jobseekers

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many specialist teams were available to work with disabled jobseekers in jobcentres in each year since 2000. [146624]

Mr. Pond: Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) within Jobcentre Plus provide support to people facing the complex barriers to work associated with disabilities. They can offer help with finding work and can refer people, where appropriate, to occupational health assessments, training and the full range of Jobcentre Plus disability programmes.

The information is not available in the format requested, as figures are not collected centrally. However, we estimate there are currently around 650 DEAs employed by Jobcentre Plus.

Jobcentre Plus

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the terms are of the Jobcentre Plus Programme Procurement Review; what the timetable is for the completion of the Review; and what independent assessment of Jobcentre Plus procurement processes are being undertaken as part of the review. [144600]

Mr. Browne: The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, David Anderson. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from David Anderson to Mr. George Osborne, dated 8 January 2004:

As Jobcentre Plus is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions concerning the terms of the Jobcentre Plus Programme Procurement Review; what the timetable is for the completion of the Review; and what independent assessment of Jobcentre Plus procurement processes are being undertaken as part of the review. This is something that falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The Jobcentre Plus Programme Procurement Review was initiated following two independent consultants reports towards the end of 2002/03 and is an ongoing review with the following aims and objectives:

1. define and communicate clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all those involved in the procurement, payment and contract management process;

2. improve procurement capability and professionalism across the procurement value chain at each tier of the organisation;

3. support more effective use of IT systems, for example by raising awareness of consequences of data input errors;

4. introduce streamlined, generic procurement processes increasingly supported by e-based approach, for example web based invitations to tender;

5. review funding models and policy to develop fewer IT supported models and to ensure rates support increased provider performance and share risk appropriately;

6. ensure that the provision purchased addresses the needs of customers and employers locally through use of standard 'requirement' templates in districts;

7. work jointly with all key stakeholders including Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Learning Skills;

8. develop and deliver an approved Jobcentre Plus Procurement Strategy, to be incorporated into DWP's Commercial Strategy, which will detail, for example, how best provision should be purchased and paid for, how Jobcentre Plus should interact and develop enhanced relationships with key providers;

9. provide resource, focus and structure through a Director led steering group to ensure proposals for change are developed and implemented resulting in better value for money and an increase in job outcomes from providers.

Jobcentre Plus is committed to keeping providers informed of the progress of the review and to seek provider's views on implementation of proposals. Five provider awareness events launching the review, covering six Jobcentre Plus regions, have been held over the last six months. In addition an ongoing progress update has been sent to all existing providers and also made available on the Jobcentre Plus website. Providers will continue to be updated and their views sought through the Provider Liaison Group. This group meets bi-monthly to discuss issues of common concern. The primary purpose of the group is

to involve providers in planning and implementation of change, giving them the opportunity to put the provider perspective to policy makers.

The overall Jobcentre Plus Procurement Strategy for employment programmes is being developed by an independent consultant drawing on a range of expertise including the Office of Government Commerce, DfES, Home Office 'Active Communities Unit' (relationship with voluntary sector providers).

Changes from the review are being implemented as they are developed and agreed by the Steering Group; the bulk of policy change will be agreed and many changes implemented by April 2004.

I hope this is helpful.

Occupational Pensions

Kevin Brennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent consultations he has had with the European Commission in relation to whether the Government are meeting their obligations to protect occupational pensions under Article 8 of the European Insolvency Directive 1980; and if he will make a statement. [145726]

Mr. Pond: We have not had recent consultations with the European Commission in relation to Article 8 of the EU Insolvency Directive 80/897. However, we have recently sent the Director General for Employment and Social affairs at the European Commission information on the transposition of Article 8 of the EU Insolvency Directive 80/897 and Article 3(4) of Council Directive 2001/23/EC (TUPE).

We take our obligations under Article 8 of the Insolvency Directive seriously and we fully meet our obligations under the Directive, as successive Governments have done since it was adopted in 1980.

In its report of 15 June 1995 on transposition of the Directive (COM(95)164), the European Commission concluded that United Kingdom legislation met the requirements of Article 8. This was further confirmed on 20 December 2002 by Mrs. Diamantopoulou, on behalf of the Commission, in response to a parliamentary question.

Poverty

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the number of children living in poverty in *(a)* the UK, *(b)* Yorkshire and *(c)* the City of York in (i) 1997 and (ii) now. [146469]

Mr. Pond: Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multi-dimensional issues, affecting many aspects of peoples' lives—including their living standards, health, housing, the quality of their environment—and not just low income. The fifth annual "Opportunity for all" report (Cm 5956) sets out the Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion and presents information on the indicators used to measure progress against this strategy.

Specific information regarding low income for Great Britain is available in "Households Below Average Income 1994/95–2001/02". Data is not available at the UK level, or below regional level.

"Measuring child poverty", published in December 2003, outlines the Government's measure of UK child poverty for the long term. This new measure will begin from 2004–05.

All publications listed are available in the Library.

HEALTH

Child Protection Register

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many children on the Child Protection Register have not yet been allocated a social worker. [145724]

Margaret Hodge: The information requested is not held centrally.

The Government accepted Recommendation 54 of the Victoria Climbie Inquiry Report which stated that "Directors of Social Services must ensure that all cases of children assessed as needing a service have an allocated social worker. In cases where this proves to be impossible, arrangements must be made to maintain contact with the child. The number, nature and reasons for such unallocated cases must be reported to the Social Services Committee on a monthly basis, (paragraph 6.589)".

The allocation of social workers was included in the checklist of good practice recommendations issued on publication of the report. The resulting Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) audit revealed that a small number of local authorities had children who were not allocated a social worker. The SSI will follow up this issue as part of its performance assessment of councils.

Genetically Modified Food

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column 995W, on genetically modified food, whether safety testing for Bt11 sweetcorn was carried out on sweetcorn destined for human consumption. [146327]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The safety of Bt11 sweetcorn has been evaluated under the procedures set out in Regulation (EC) No 258/97 and according to the European Community Scientific Committee on Food's scheme for the safety assessment of genetically modified foods. The safety assessment involved detailed analysis of both the Bt11 field maize and Bt11 sweetcorn intended for human consumption. The Scientific Committee on Food was satisfied on the basis of all the information provided that the Bt11 sweetcorn was as safe as its conventional counterpart.

Health Visitors

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the vacancy rates were for health visitors in *(a)* the UK, *(b)* London and *(c)* each region for each year since 1997. [146326]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 7 January 2003]:* The Department's annual vacancy survey, which collects health visitor vacancies started in 1999. The three month vacancy rate and number for health visitors and also the number of health visitors in post in both whole time equivalent and headcount in England and in each Government Office Region since 1999 is shown in the table.

Information in respect of health visitors in Scotland and Wales is the responsibility of the devolved administrations. While the institutions in Northern Ireland are dissolved responsibility rests with Ministers in the Northern Ireland office.

Department of Health Vacancies Survey
Health visitor three month vacancies in NHS trusts by Government office region—three month vacancy rates, numbers and staff in post

	3 month vacancy rate (percentage)	*3 month vacancy number*	*Staff in post (whole time equivalent)*	*Staff in post (headcount)*
	March 1999		*September 1998*	
England	1.0	99	10,068	12,572
East Midlands	0.4	3	796	988
East of England	1.5	14	913	1,192
London	2.2	36	1,622	1,965
North East	0.4	2	564	658
North West	0.2	3	1,591	1,911
South East	1.4	21	1,484	1,984
South West	0.4	4	946	1,205
West Midlands	0.5	5	1,105	1,346
Yorkshire and the Humber	1.1	11	1,046	1,323

Department of Health Vacancies Survey
Health visitor three month vacancies in NHS trusts by Government office region—three month vacancy rates, numbers and staff in post

	3 month vacancy rate (percentage)	*3 month vacancy number*	*Staff in post (whole time equivalent)*	*Staff in post (headcount)*
	March 2000		*September 1999*	
England	1.9	192	10,161	12,800
East Midlands	1.4	11	811	1,037
East of England	4.0	36	883	1,135
London	3.3	57	1,693	2,052
North East	0.4	3	569	659
North West	2.6	42	1,588	1,903
South East	1.2	19	1,524	2,084
South West	0.3	3	920	1,189
West Midlands	1.2	14	1,132	1,420
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.6	6	1,040	1,321

Department of Health Vacancies Survey

Health visitor three month vacancies in NHS trusts by Government office region—three month vacancy rates, numbers and staff in post

	3 month vacancy rate (percentage)	*3 month vacancy number*	*Staff in post (whole time equivalent)*	*Staff in post (headcount)*
	March 2001		*September 2000*	
England	2.2	227	10,046	12,827
East Midlands	1.4	11	796	1,028
East of England	1.6	16	928	1,210
London	6.4	105	1,604	1,968
North East	0.7	4	593	691
North West	0.9	15	1,562	1,896
South East	2.3	35	1,512	2,102
South West	1.7	16	938	1,231
West Midlands	0.6	7	1,107	1,410
Yorkshire and the Humber	1.6	17	1,007	1,291

Department of Health Vacancies Survey

Health visitor three month vacancies in NHS trusts by Government office region—three month vacancy rates, numbers and staff in post

	3 month vacancy rate (percentage)	*3 month vacancy number*	*Staff in post (whole time equivalent)*	*Staff in post (headcount)*
	March 2002		*September 2001*	
England	2.7	281	10,186	13,053
East Midlands	1.6	12	798	1,038
East of England	2.5	23	884	1,187
London	7.0	120	1,636	1,999
North East	1.8	13	565	655
North West	1.4	23	1,594	1,942
South East	3.1	46	1,496	2,047
South West	1.5	15	935	1,258
West Midlands	1.2	13	1,140	1,435
Yorkshire and the Humber	1.5	16	1,139	1,492

Department of Health Vacancies Survey

Health visitor three month vacancies in NHS trusts by Government office region—three month vacancy rates, numbers and staff in post

	3 month vacancy rate (percentage)	*3 month vacancy number*	*Staff in post (whole time equivalent)*	*Staff in post (headcount)*
	March 2003		*September 2002*	
England	2.3	229	9,912	12,774
East Midlands	2.7	21	784	1,016
East of England	3.4	31	855	1,148
London	5.2	77	1,454	1,763
North East	0.8	5	570	668
North West	1.2	18	1,578	1,968
South East	3.0	46	1,546	2,166
South West	1.6	15	919	1,241
West Midlands	0.5	5	1,108	1,391
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.9	11	1,097	1,413

Notes:

1. Three month vacancy information is as at 31 March each year.

2. Three month vacancies are vacancies which Trusts are actively trying to fill, which had lasted for three months or more (whole-time equivalents).

3. Rates are three month vacancies expressed as a percentage of three month vacancies plus whole-time equivalent staff in post.

4. From 2001, rates are calculated using staff in post from the Vacancy Survey. Prior to this, rates are calculated using staff in post from the previous September's workforce census.

5. Staff in post data is as at 30 September each year.

Source:

Department of Health Vacancy Survey.

Department of Health Non-Medical Workforce Census.

Waiting Lists/Times

Mr. Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the waiting time for a routine MRI scan in each NHS trust in England. [145184]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 5 January 2003]*: Data on waiting times for diagnostic tests are not collected centrally, however data may be collected locally. The central returns capture consultant speciality level data on waits for a first outpatient appointment and for inpatient admissions.

However, it is the Governments' priority to ensure that all patients are seen quickly in the first instance so that if diagnostic tests are required they are requested sooner. Where this is not the case we are determined to speed up the process. The National Health Service is committed to reducing the length of time that people wait before their treatment starts and the NHS Plan set targets for staged reductions in waiting times.

Public Health Nurses

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether public health nurses are employed within the NHS. [146323]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 7 January 2003]*: Health visitors, school nurses, communicable disease control nurses and occupational health nurses are employed as public health nurses within the National Health Service. These disciplines focus on preventing ill health and operate at a population level as well as undertaking preventive work with individuals and families.

Old Runwell Hospital

Mr. Francois: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to complete the sale of the Old Runwell Hospital site for partial redevelopment; and if he will make a statement. [145064]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 5 January 2003]*: It is intended to settle a disposal strategy for the Old Runwell Hospital site once outline planning permission has been achieved.

Social Workers

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to increase the number of social workers with a child protection background. [145723]

Dr. Ladyman: The Government are funding a national social work recruitment campaign aimed at raising awareness about what social workers do and increasing the number of applications to social work training. The campaign has been successful so far in reversing the trend of falling numbers of applications to social work courses: in 2002 the applications rose by 6.5 per cent. A post-qualifying child care award was developed in 1999 to ensure that social workers are equipped to undertake complex child care work and provide high quality services to children and families. Child protection is one of the areas covered by the award.

Since January 2000, specific funds have been provided through the Training Support Programme Grant to help support child care social workers who undertake the award.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of staff employed within his Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145928]

Mr. Pearson: 7.2 per cent. of those employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Office are aged over 55. 29—or 0.9 per cent.—of those who were recruited in the year to September 2003 were aged over 55.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many senior civil servants in his Department are disabled, expressed in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of whole-time equivalents. [144980]

Mr. Pearson: Eight senior civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Office have declared a disability. This amounts to 3 per cent. of those senior civil servants who have provided information on whether or not they have a disability. Staff provide information on disability voluntarily.

Fair Trade Products

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether it is the policy of his Department to use fair trade products, as a matter of course, in *(a)* sales on departmental premises and *(b)* receptions and meetings involving staff and visitors. [142810]

Mr. Pearson: The sale and use of fair trade products by Departments of the Northern Ireland Administration and the Northern Ireland Office is limited to food products used in catering. Almost all staff catering services have been contracted out since the early nineties and the sale of food products on departmental premises, and their use in receptions and meetings involving staff and visitors, has therefore become the responsibility of the private sector suppliers.

There is no requirement to provide fair trade products. Government Departments in Northern Ireland are free to make their own decisions on such products against a background of obtaining best value for money, the European Community Procurement Directives and individual departmental objectives.

Giant's Causeway

David Burnside: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the development of tourist facilities at the Giant's Causeway in County Antrim. [146648]

Mr. Pearson: On 14 April 2003 I, along with my ministerial colleague Angela Smith MP, announced proposals to deliver new facilities at the Giant's Causeway which would be capable of offering a world class experience to visitors.

Our proposals centred on the commissioning of an international competition to design new visitor facilities which would complement the Giant's Causeway as a World Heritage Site. This international competition, which will be initiated in early spring, will seek designs from around the world and I am confident that by proceeding along this path we can deliver a world class solution that will continue to capture the imagination of visitors in 20 years time.

The Government are committed to seeing visitor facilities at the Giant's Causeway that are genuinely world class, conform to the highest standards in terms of economic and environmental sustainability and which will greatly enhance Northern Ireland's place on the International map as a tourist destination.

Over the past number of months my officials, in conjunction with colleagues in the Environment and Heritage Service, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Department of Finance and Personnel, have been exploring a number of options with regard to the most appropriate method of delivering the solution. These discussions are ongoing. The National Trust and Moyle District Council, the owners of the site, have also been kept informed of developments.

Prison Service

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much it has cost to date to transport the *(a)* Director General and *(b)* Director of Operations of the Northern Ireland Prison Service in armoured vehicles when they are in the Province on business. [146176]

Jane Kennedy: It is inappropriate for me to comment on the security arrangements of individuals.

Saville Inquiry

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the cost has been of the Saville Inquiry so far; and what his estimate is of the eventual overall cost. [144450]

Mr. Spellar: On the figures available at the end of December 2003 the total cost of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry has been £127 million. The Northern Ireland Office has spent £103.5 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence advises me that his Department has spent £23.5 million. The overall cost of the Inquiry is estimated to be £155 million.

Sinn Fein-IRA

David Burnside: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the relationship between Sinn Fein's elected representatives and the membership of the Provisional IRA and its Army Council. [146646]

Jane Kennedy: The Provisional IRA remains a proscribed terrorist organisation, Sinn Fein are not—they are a political party. However, it is the Government's view that both organisations are inextricably linked. Information about the links between individual members of Sinn Fein and the IRA is an intelligence matter and in line with Part II, Paragraph 4 ("Law enforcement and legal proceedings") of the Code of Practice on access to Government Information, it would be inappropriate to comment.

Teacher Training

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students graduated from teacher training colleges in each of the last five years; and how many were employed in a school within one year of graduating. [145304]

Jane Kennedy: The number of students who have graduated from the Higher Education Institutions in each of the last five years are shown in the following table. The Department does not maintain statistics on the number of graduates employed in schools within one year of graduating.

Students graduating from teacher training colleges

Institutions	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*
Stranmillis University College	134	127	145	149	167
St. Mary's University College	160	151	146	150	170
Queen's University	159	172	184	190	199
University of Ulster	169	169	181	185	187
Open University	27	25	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—

[1] Course withdrawn.
[2] No graduates until March 2004.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

School Behaviour and Attendance Funding

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in each local education authority area received behaviour and attendance funding in the current financial year; and what the total funding made available in the current financial year under the programme was in each local education authority area. [145433]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The behaviour and attendance strand of our Key Stage 3 Strategy provides audit and training materials and expert advice. These are freely available to all secondary schools. In addition, our Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) funds a range of measures to support schools in disadvantaged areas facing the greatest challenges. 60 BIP local education authorities (LEAs) are each receiving about 1.4 million in the current financial year to fund these measures. Individual LEAs and Excellence in Cities partnerships

decide which measures to adopt and which schools to involve in the light of local needs. They give priority to a core group of schools, typically four secondary schools and about 20 linked primary schools in an LEA. But in many LEAs other schools also benefit from BIP measures, which include multi-agency Behaviour and Education Support Teams and extra Learning Support Units, Learning Mentors and Education Welfare Officers as well as locally-devised initiatives.

Child Poverty

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many children in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales lived in poverty in (i) 2001–02 and (ii) 2002–03; [145659]

(2) what definition he uses of child poverty. [145660]

Mr. Pond: I have been asked to reply.

Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multi-dimensional issues, affecting many aspects of peoples' lives, including their living standards, health, housing, the quality of their environment and not just low income. The fifth annual 'Opportunity for all' report (Cm 5956) sets out the Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion and presents information on the indicators used to measure progress against this strategy. The Welsh Assembly also publish their own annual report on poverty and social exclusion, the latest of which is 'The Third annual report on social inclusion in Wales'.

Specific information regarding low income for Great Britain is available in 'Households Below Average Income 1994/95 to 2001/02'; data are not yet available for 2003–03.

'Measuring child poverty', published in December 2003, outlines the Government's measure of UK child poverty for the long-term; this new measure will begin from 2004/05.

All publications listed are available in the Library.

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* enrolments and *(b)* graduations there were in each of the last three years in Cambridgeshire further education colleges in (i) construction, (ii) computing, (iii) software engineering, (iv) electronics, (v) manufacturing engineering and (vi) hospitality, catering and tourism. [146442]

Alan Johnson: In the last three years, there were no learners enrolled on Software Engineering courses at further education colleges in Cambridgeshire. The number of enrolments on courses in the other subject areas requested, and the number of qualifications achieved in those subjects, are shown in the table.

	1999–2000		*2000–2001*		*2001–2002*	
Subject Area	*Enrolments*	*Achievements*	*Enrolments*	*Achievements*	*Enrolments*	*Achievements*
Construction	780	590	850	710	920	290
Computing	8,580	5,040	9,190	6,760	9,140	3260
Electronics	90	40	100	20	190	160
Manufacturing Engineering	180	150	210	160	70	30
Hospitality, Catering and Tourism	5,130	770	5940	1,770	5,460	4710

Source:
Individualised Student Record

Further Education

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of 16 to 18 year olds in Huntingdon *(a)* started further education courses and *(b)* completed such courses in each year since 1999. [146437]

Alan Johnson: Data on the percentage of students participating in post-compulsory education are not calculated for areas smaller than Local Education Authorities (LEAs) as reliable estimates cannot be made. Furthermore, participation rates at sub-national level are only available for 16 and 17 year olds. The percentage of 16 and 17 year olds participating in full-time education and in education and training in Cambridgeshire LEA for end 1998 to end 2000, the latest available year, is shown in the table.

Participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in Cambridgeshire LEA, 1998 to 2000

Year	*Full-time education (percentage)*	*Total education and training[1] (percentage)*
1998	65	76
1999	67	77
2000	66	76

[1] Includes participation in full-time education, part-time education and government supported training

Source:
DfES Statistical Bulletin, published 16 December 2002.

Completion (retention) rates are only available for Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded learners at further education and sixth form colleges. The proportion of courses studied for at colleges in Cambridgeshire by 16–18 year olds that were completed in the three years to 2001/02 is shown in the table.

Retention rates in LSC funded FE provision for 16–18 year olds studying at FE and sixth form colleges in Cambridgeshire by expected end year

Expected end year	*Retention rate (percentage)*
19992000	82
2000–01	83
2001–02	86

Source:
Individualised Student Record

School Funding

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list for each programme funded by the Department for *(a)* primary schools and

(b) secondary schools introduced in each year since 1997 the funding available in the year the programme started and in each subsequent year; and whether at the end of the life of each programme it was expected that the school would continue to fund that programme. [145613]

Mr. Charles Clarke *[holding answer 5 January 2004]*: It is not possible to answer the Question in precisely the way it has been asked. Table 3.2 of the Department's Annual Report sets out the Departmental funding for schools since 1997 and that shows an increase from less than £2 billion in 1998 to almost £9 billion this year. A copy of the Report has been placed in the Library. However, most programmes were not specifically for particular types of schools and local education authorities were free to distribute the grants between schools in their areas.

In 2003–04, the Department stopped paying grant for programmes which were worth £800 million in 2002–03 as part of our commitment to reduce ringfenced funding for schools. However much of this funding relates to time-limited courses that had run their course. Having regard to the £250 million headroom between the £2.7 billion increase in general funding for schools which took account of the overall pressures on schools, including the £800 million grant reduction, we intended that each school should choose for itself whether to continue the programmes previously supported through specific grant.

Over the next two years, we have announced that we will be making available additional non-ringfenced resources to reverse the reductions in the Standards Fund which were previously planned. For 2004–05, schools will generally receive a 4 per cent. cash increase on this year's Standards Fund allocation so there should be no reason for any school to decide on financial rather than educational grounds not to continue a particular programme. In total I am making an additional £820 million extra available over the years 2004/05 and 2005/06.

School Leavers

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children left school in 2002–03 without a GCSE pass. [145663]

Mr. Miliband: The provisional figures for 2002/03 show that 5.4 per cent., or 33,506 pupils aged 15, failed to achieve a GCSE or GNVQ equivalent pass.

School Trips

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will assess the *(a)* educational and *(b)* social benefits for pupils from low income backgrounds of taking part in school trips; and if he will take steps to provide specific funding for such trips. [145526]

Mr. Miliband: My Department recognises the benefits of educational visits for all pupils. Such visits which take place during term time are available to all maintained school pupils, regardless of the parental income.

Student Finance

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the average student loan taken out by students in *(a)* each region and *(b)* England was in each year since 1997–98. [146092]

Alan Johnson: The tables show the average full-time income-contingent loan taken out by students in the English Government Office Regions and in England and the average mortgage style loan taken out by students in England.

Average income-contingent[1,2] loan taken out by domicile of student—academic years 1999/2000 to 2002/03[3]

	Academic year			
Government Office Region[4,5]	*1999/2000*	*2000/01[6]*	*2001/02[7]*	*2002/03[8]*
North East	3,060	3,020	3,060	n/a
North West	3,130	3,090	3,130	n/a
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,110	3,080	3,130	n/a
East Midlands	3,190	3,120	3,170	n/a
West Midlands	3,140	3,090	3,150	n/a
East of England	3,180	3,150	3,190	n/a
Inner London	3,540	3,470	3,500	n/a
Outer London	3,240	3,200	3,240	n/a
South East	3,180	3,130	3,160	n/a
South West	3,240	3,190	3,250	n/a
England	3,180	3,160	3,190	3,240

n/a = Regional breakdown not yet available.

[1] New student support arrangements were introduced from academic year 1998/99. New students in 1998/99 (apart from certain specified exceptions) received support for maintenance expenditure through means-tested grants (comprising about a quarter of the support available) and non income-assessed student loans (comprising about three quarters of the support available). From 1999/2000 students who entered higher education after 1998/99 received support for maintenance expenditure through loans, of which approximately three quarters of the value was non income-assessed. Loans made under these arrangements are repayable on an income contingent basis.

[2] Excludes the fixed rate loans (£500) for eligible part-time students, introduced in September 2000.

[3] Figures have been rounded to the nearest £10.

[4] Government Office Region of domicile of student.

[5] Regional level data have been taken from available information and may include a small number of loans which have been authorised for payment but not paid.

[6] The apparent fall in the average value of income-contingent loan taken out in 2000/01 can be explained mainly by the fact that this was the third year of this loan scheme; students on the third year of a three year course will receive the final year rate of loan which is at a lower rate as it does not cover the summer vacation. This effect is not present in 1999/2000 and has been levelled out in the years subsequent to 2000/01. Additionally, this is likely to be the first year in which those students on sandwich courses have their placement year and are therefore in receipt of the reduced rate of loan.

[7] Latest year for which data by region are available.

[8] Provisional.

Source:

Student Loans Company.

Average mortgage style[1] loan taken out by domicile of student — academic years 1999/2000 to 2002/03[2]

Academic year	*Domicile – England*
1999/2000	1,470
2000/01	1,460
2001/02	1,520
2002/03[3]	1,580

[1] Loans available to students who entered higher education up to academic year 1997/98 and those who entered in 1998/99 under existing arrangements. These loans are non-income assessed and are repayable on a fixed term, mortgage style, basis.
[2] Figures have been rounded to the nearest £10.
[3] Provisional
Source:
Student Loans Company.

Data on income-contingent loans at a regional, or England level are not available for academic year 1998/99; data on the domicile of students taking out fixed rate mortgage style loans (normally those who entered higher education before 1998/99) are only available at a UK level for 1997/98 and 1998/99.[3] For subsequent years, data are not available below England level because applications are made through the students' education institution.

Teaching Methods

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 11 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 613W, on teaching methods, what the specific provisions are in the *(a)* primary and *(b)* key stage three strategies in relation to the way pupils are grouped. [145475]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: The design of effective lessons is fundamental to the pursuit of high quality teaching and learning whatever the age of the pupil, their level of ability, or the subject or skill being learned.

The Primary Strategy recommends that literacy and mathematics lessons begin with whole class teaching sessions followed by guided reading and writing activities, during which pupils are grouped according to their individual learning needs.

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy recommends a consideration of pupil grouping as part of classroom organisation which is one contributory factor towards effective lesson design. Furthermore, the Strategy has produced a range of materials for schools (such as critical teaching units, literacy progress units, Springboard 7, learning challenge and booster materials) to use in meeting the needs of pupils below expected levels. These allow schools, depending on their particular local circumstances, the flexibility of being able to provide whole class teaching; to re-group pupils according to their needs and abilities; provide within-class pupil grouping and one-to-one coaching or mentoring.

Truancy

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 194W, on truancy, if he will list the programmes within the Behaviour Improvement Programme 2002 to 2004; and what the *(a)* purpose and *(b)* cost of each was. [R] [144138]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Behaviour Improvement Programme funds a range of measures to improve behaviour, reduce exclusions, provide full-time education for excluded pupils, reduce truancy, improve attendance and provide key workers for children at risk of exclusion, truancy and crime. Different measures are adopted by local education authorities and Excellence in Cities partnerships to reflect local priorities. They typically include:

Behaviour and Education Support Teams, which bring together education, health and social care professionals to provide multi-agency support for pupils with serious behaviour problems, their families and their schools;

expanded Learning Support Units, which provide in-school education for disruptive pupils outside mainstream classes;

additional Learning Mentors, who provide support for individual pupils with behaviour and attendance problems;

additional time for senior school staff to focus on behaviour and attendance issues;

electronic registration systems for schools;

enhanced Pupil Referral Units and other forms of alternative provision for excluded pupils;

additional services on school sites to increase community involvement; and

support for parents of disaffected or excluded pupils.

Each BIP LEA is receiving about £1.4 million in 2003–04 and will receive a similar level of funding in 2004–05.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Correspondence

David Winnick: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs pursuant to his answer of 18 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1115W, when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 13 November to Lord Filkin; and why the reply was not sent by 22 December. [146618]

Mr. Leslie: Lord Filkin wrote on 7 January 2004 to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North in response to his letter of 13 November 2003. I apologise for the delay, unfortunately administrative errors prevented an earlier reply.

PRIME MINISTER

LNM Holdings

Adam Price: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he and members of the Government have received from LNM Holdings in the last year. [146649]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware I have received none and my office has made inquiries with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for Trade and Industry and the Department for International Development, who are also not aware of any representations.

Proportional Representation

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has held recently with representatives of political parties on the subject of proportional representation. [146620]

The Prime Minister: I have had no recent discussions on this issue.

Steel Industry (Romania)

Adam Price: To ask the Prime Minister what representations his Government have made to the Romanian Government regarding the steel industry since January 2003. [146650]

The Prime Minister: The Government have made no bilateral representations to the Romanian Government regarding the steel industry since January 2003.

The Government have had contacts with the Romanian Government on steel in the context of adherence to existing trade agreements and EU accession negotiations on competition and state aid.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Brownfield Sites

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether his Department designates former mineral workings as brownfield sites; and if he will make a statement. [145388]

Keith Hill: The Government's definition of brownfield land includes land used for mineral extraction and waste disposal where provision for restoration has not been made through development control procedures. Specifically this relates to minerals and waste sites which have remained unrestored after use. All other such sites will be restored to 'greenfield' status, by virtue of the planning condition.

Community Facilities

Dr. Whitehead: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much land has been acquired by *(a)* English Partnerships and *(b)* regional development agencies since January 2002 to enable the provision of (i) public transport, (ii) public open spaces, (iii) schools, (iv) hospitals and (v) other community facilities in each of the (A) four growth areas in the South East and (B) nine pathfinder areas announced in the Communities Plan. [145751]

Keith Hill: Since January 2002, English Partnerships and the regional development agencies (RDAs) have acquired land for regeneration activity within the boundaries of the four Growth areas and the nine Market Renewal Pathfinder areas, as follows:

Quantity of Land acquired (hectares)

	English Partnerships	*Regional development agencies*
Market Renewal Pathfinder areas	26.5	145.2
Growth areas	5.25	54.3

These acquisitions include sites within urban regeneration company areas that fall within the boundaries of the Pathfinder and Growth areas. Land has not yet been directly acquired as part of the Market Renewal Pathfinder schemes.

In his statement on 30 July 2003, my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced that we had agreed in principle to provide funding to help English Partnerships and the relevant RDAs acquire land for remediation and eventual release for future development in the Milton Keynes/South Midlands and Ashford Growth Areas.

Sustainable mixed use will be promoted for acquired sites but until further master planning and development agreements have been finalised, their precise use will not be known.

Deprivation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress has been made in taking housing costs into account when measuring income levels in revised indices of deprivation. [146109]

Yvette Cooper: The possibility of making an adjustment for the 'cost of living' including housing costs was considered as part of the project to update the Indices of Deprivation 2000. The main source of comprehensive data on this subject is the Retail Price Index compiled by the Office for National Statistics. This Index, however, is only available at national level and would not allow adjustments to the Income domain at sub-district level. It is therefore not possible to make any adjustment for housing costs in this update.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress has been made in publishing indices of deprivation by Super Output Area level. [146110]

Yvette Cooper: The proposal to publish the Index at Super Output Area level (SOA) was overwhelmingly supported in the recently concluded consultation on updating the Indices of Deprivation. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's ability to publish the Index at SOA Level 1 (between 1,000–3,000 population) is dependent on the provision of the SOA boundaries and testing of the data to ensure that there are no concerns over disclosure or data reliability at this level. The relevant boundaries have now been received from the Office for National Statistics and testing of the data has begun.

Firefighters

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many regular firefighters were employed by the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service on 1 December 2003. [146436]

Mr. Raynsford: Information provided by the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service shows that there were 283 wholetime firefighters employed by them on 1 December 2003.

Housing Stock Transfer

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to monitor the performance of tenants' advisers in the process of stock transfer; and which organisations will undertake this work. [146498]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has no plans to monitor the performance of Independent Tenants' Advisers (ITAs) involved in the stock transfer process. Guidance published in December 2001 by the Office makes clear that an ITA is expected to provide good quality, tailored and flexible services that meet tenants' needs.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many complaints have been received on the role and probity of tenants' advisers involved in discussions on transfer of council stocks. [146499]

Keith Hill: While the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister may receive comments in relation to the work of Independent Tenant Advisers, in general there have been no formal complaints received on the role and probity of tenants' advisers involved in discussions on transfer of council stock.

Local Authority Funding

Mr. Tyrie: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will publish the *(a)* calculations and *(b)* assumptions used to reach the revised levels he has set for grant floor and ceilings following the Chancellor's announcement in the pre-Budget Report on 10 December. [144633]

Mr. Raynsford: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 856W.

Local Referendums

Bob Russell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what procedures are available to residents of shire boroughs and districts to request a referendum on a major local issue. [146571]

Mr. Raynsford: Residents may make representations to their local authority about holding referendums on any matter, including finance, which relates to the services for which the local authority is responsible, or to its power to promote the well-being of its area. The decision on whether to hold the referendum is for the local authority.

Millennium Dome

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much public money has been spent on the Millennium Dome in each week in the last three months; and if he will make a statement on the total amount of public money spent on the Dome since 1 January 2001. [145811]

Keith Hill: The New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC) was responsible for maintaining the Dome from its closure on 31 December 2000 to end of June 2001. During this period NMEC, funded by the National Lottery and not taxpayers, incurred costs of £8.2 million; although this was partially offset by £3.9 million of income from the sale of assets during the decommissioning stage.

English Partnerships (EP) took over responsibility in July 2001. Up to end of September 2003 EP incurred, net of VAT, expenditure of £26.6 million, after deduction of income from fee-paying events of £0.9 million. This figure (before deduction of income) is broken down as follows: management and maintenance (including staff costs) £6.5 million; decommissioning and site preparation for its long-term use £6.7 million; current sale process £7.6 million; earlier competition to find a long-term use for the Dome £6.7 million.

Weekly figures are not readily available, and final cost figures are not yet available for the last quarter of 2003, as English Partnerships is awaiting a number of outstanding invoices. EP's costs incurred for the three months up to and including September 2003 were £1.05 million, comprising £385,000 on the current sale process and £665,000 on management and maintenance. The incurred monthly breakdown is as follows:

(£)

Month	*Current Sale Process*	*Management and Maintenance (including staff costs)* [1]	*Total*
July	131,000	188,000	319,000
August	95,000	252,000	347,000
September	159,000	225,000	384,000
Total	385,000	665,000	1,050,000

[1] Monthly costs include rates, utilities, security and maintenance, and English Partnerships' staff costs on management and maintenance of the Dome. Costs are calculated on an accruals basis and may be subject to reassessments, by the relevant authorities, of rates or other charges included in the cost of managing and maintaining the Dome.

All costs incurred by EP since it took over financial responsibility for the Dome in July 2001 and including the costs of the sale process will be recovered from eventual sale proceeds.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list those local authorities in England who do not operate a discretionary notification or control registration scheme for houses in multiple occupation under Part XI of the Housing Act 1985. [146462]

Keith Hill: On the basis of the Housing Investment Programme 2003 returns, a total of 150 local authorities in England have yet not adopted Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) registration schemes. These local authorities are listed below:

Adur
Amber Valley
Bassetlaw
Bath and North East Somerset
Bedford
Berwick-upon-Tweed
Blaby
Blyth Valley
Boston
Bradford
Braintree
Breckland
Brentwood
Broadland
Broxbourne
Carrick
Chesterfield
Chichester
Chiltern
Chorley
Christchurch
City of London

Congleton
Corby
Cotswold
Craven
Crawley
Crewe and Nantwich
Dacorum
Dartford
Daventry
Derbyshire
Dales
Derwentside
Dudley
Durham
Easington
East Devon
East Hertfordshire
East Lindsey
East Staffordshire
Eastleigh
Eden
Ellesmere Port and Neston
Elmbridge
Epping Forest
Epsom and Ewell
Exeter
Fenland
Fylde
Gedling
Gloucester
Great Yarmouth
Halton
Hambleton
Harborough
Hart
High Peak
Hinckley and Bosworth
Horsham
Hyndburn
Ipswich
Isle of Wight
Islington
Kennet
Kerrier
Knowsley
Leicester
Lewes
Lewisham
Liverpool
Macclesfield
Maldon
Manchester
Merton
Mid Suffolk
Mid Sussex
North Cornwall
North Dorset
North East Derbyshire
North Kesteven
North Tyneside
North West Leicestershire
Northampton
Norwich
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Oadby and Wigston
Oswestry
Plymouth
Poole
Reading
Reigate and Banstead
Restormel
Ribble Valley
Richmond upon Thames
Richmondshire
Rochford
Rotherham
Salisbury
Sandwell
Sedgefield
Sedgemoor
Sefton
Selby
Sevenoaks
Shrewsbury and Atcham
Slough
Solihull
South Cambridgeshire
South Kesteven
South Lakeland
South Northamptonshire
South Oxfordshire
South Shropshire
South Somerset
South Staffordshire
Spelthorne
St. Helens
Stevenage
Stockport
Stoke-on-Trent
Stratford-upon-Avon
Stroud
Suffolk Coastal
Swindon
Taunton Deane
Teignbridge
Telford and Wrekin
Three Rivers
Thurrock
Tonbridge and Malling

Tunbridge Wells
Tynedale
Vale of White Horse
Vale Royal
Walkefield
Wandsworth
Waverley
Wealden
Wellingborough
Welwyn
Hatfield
West Berkshire
West Dorset
West Lindsey
West Somerset
West Wiltshire
Wigan
Windsor and Maidenhead
Woking
Worcester
Worthing
Wychavon
Wyre

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what his most recent estimate is of the number of *(a)* households and *(b)* people in privately rented houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) dwellings in England, broken down by (i) traditional and bedsit HMOs, (ii) shared houses and flats, (iii) households with lodgers and (iv) HMO buildings converted into flats. [146463]

Keith Hill: The most recent estimates for private rented houses in multiple occupation are from the 1996 English House Condition Survey:

Private rented HMO in England 1996

Thousands

	(i) Traditional and bedsit HMOs	*(ii) Shared house/flat*	*(iii) Household with lodger*[2]	*(iv) Buildings converted into flats*[1]
(a) Number of households	165	188	202	302
(b) Number of people	267	547	253	472

[1] Shared converted flats, households with lodgers in converted flats and bedsits in converted flats are included in the respective columns not in the converted flat total.
[2] The number of people refers to the number of lodgers and excludes the members of the landlord's household.
Source:
DETR (1999) "English House Condition Survey 1996 Houses in Multiple Occupation in the private rented sector".

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what his most recent estimate is of the number of private houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) accommodation units and dwellings in England, broken down by *(i)* traditional and bedsit HMOs, (ii) shared houses and flats, (iii) households with lodgers and (iv) HMO buildings converted into flats. [146464]

Keith Hill: The most recent estimates for private houses in multiple occupation are from the 1996 English House Condition Survey.

Private rented HMO in England 1996

Thousand

	(i) Traditional and bedsit HMOs	*(ii) Shared house/flat*	*(iii) Household with lodger*	*(iv) Buildings converted into flats*[1]
Number of accommodation units	219	189	202	337
Number of dwellings	56	189	202	337

[1] Shared converted flats, households with lodgers in converted flats and bedsits in converted flats are included in the respective columns not in the converted flat total. *Source:*
DETR (1999) "English House Condition Survey 1996 Houses in Multiple Occupation in the private rented sector".

Starter Home Initiative

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to extend the Starter Home Initiative for key health workers; and if he will take steps to ensure that a wider range of health care professionals working in the NHS, including radiographers, are eligible. [146495]

Keith Hill: Under the Starter Home Initiative, assistance is available to a wide range of health staff including radiographers. Priorities for assistance depend upon the recruitment and retention difficulties being experienced. From 1 April 2004, a new key worker programme will succeed the Starter Home Initiative. This will provide assistance to first time buyers and existing homeowners who need to move to a larger home. It will also provide homes for key workers at below market rents. Funding will be targeted in areas where the high cost of housing is undermining recruitment and retention. Full details of the new programme, including the eligible key worker groups, will be announced by the beginning of March. Employer contributions will supplement assistance under the new programme.

Thames Gateway

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what initiatives are in place to improve professional planning and regeneration skills and capacity in order to deliver his plans for the regeneration of the Thames Gateway; and when the Government expect these initiatives to yield a major improvement in the availability of such professional skills and capacity. [146465]

Keith Hill: Improving the skills of planning, design and regeneration professionals will take time and will require the long-term commitment of a wide range of public, private and voluntary organisations.

As part of this process Sir John Egan is currently undertaking a review of the professional skills required, to deliver the strategic objectives of our Sustainable Communities Plan. We are currently awaiting the outcome of this review. The conclusions of Sir John's report will be used to inform our longer-term strategic approach vis-a-vis the development of professional planning, design and regeneration skills as these relate to the built environment in the Thames Gateway and elsewhere.

Through our Sustainable Communities Plan, we have earmarked £17.0 million over the next three years, in order to improve the quality of skills associated with the Built environment. Of this the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) have received an initial allocation of £1.6 million to carry out a specific programme of skills related work. The experience and best practice developed as part of this work will be used to inform our longer-term strategic approach.

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how the Government will ensure that new housing developments in the Thames Gateway meet high standards of design. [146466]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is committed to improving the quality of the built environment in the Thames Gateway and elsewhere. To ensure that this happens, Planning Policy Guidance 1 (PPG1) "General Policy and Principles" requires that "good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere". This policy is supported by our good practice guidance, "By Design". We are currently in the process of updating PPG1 and will take this opportunity to restate our commitment to good quality and sustainable design.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is working with a wide range of partners to deliver this through a number of policy initiatives. Our Sustainable Communities Plan is central to achieving this and the comprehensive agenda this sets out includes significant extra funding for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). This will be used to drive up design standards and to improve associated skills.

We have increased funding for CABE from £0.5 million in 2002–03 to £17.75 million over the next three years. CABE are currently working with a range of key partners to ensure that strategies comprehensively incorporate robust requirements for good design. For example, CABE, in partnership with English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation, are scheduled to launch the Growth Areas Housing Quality Forum in March 2004. The Forum will bring together representatives from all key agencies involved in commissioning and procuring new housing, including local authorities, development agencies, mortgage lenders and landowners and will encourage the active participation of private sector house builders and Registered Social Landlords.

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many planning applications for housing or mixed use development in the Thames Gateway have been refused since March 2000 on the grounds of poor design quality. [146467]

Keith Hill: Information relating to the number of planning applications refused in the Thames Gateway since March 2000 on grounds of poor design is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All local planning authorities within the Thames Gateway and elsewhere, are statutorily obliged to keep information relating to the status of individual planning applications within their area of operation.

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans the Government has for local planning authorities in the Thames Gateway to adopt specific quality criteria for housing and other developments; and what role the Government has in encouraging planning authorities to adopt such criteria. [146468]

Keith Hill: Planning Policy Guidance 1 (PPG1) "Planning Policy and Principles" requires that "good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere". This policy is supported by our good practice guidance "By Design". PPG1 also encourages Local Planning Authorities to draw up their own clear policies vis-a-vis the built environment and to prepare supplementary design guidance where appropriate. In preparing local policy and/or guidance, Local Planning Authorities are expected to take full account of any regional guidance that may impact upon their area of operation. For example, London Authorities would need to take account of guidance/criteria contained within the London Spatial Strategy.

To this end, we have no plans at this stage to issue any specific quality criteria for housing and other developments in the Thames Gateway.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is currently in the process of updating PPG1 and will take this opportunity to restate our commitment to achieving good quality and sustainable design vis-a-vis the built environment.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive

Clive Efford: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Department of Trade and Industry regarding the introduction of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive. [146984]

Phil Hope: Ministers and officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) continue to discuss this issue with those Departments who have an interest in this Directive. This includes involvement in an official level inter-departmental project team led by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which is planning for implementation of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.

Water Pollution

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what instances there have been of oil and fuel-related pollution of water from *(a)* industrial and commercial premises and *(b)* domestic premises in each of the past five years; [145784]

(2) how many *(a)* category 1 and *(b)* category 2 instances of oil and fuel-related pollution of water there were from (i) industrial and commercial premises and (ii) domestic premises in each of the past five years. [145785]

Mr. Morley: I have been asked to reply.

The Environment Agency will be able to provide some data for the years 2001–03. This will take a little time to compile but will be made available to the Library of the House as soon as possible. I will write to let you know when that is. Comparable data for earlier years is not available and cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 12 January 2004

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Asylum

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how much the Department spent on the delivery of the asylum process in the last financial year. [146672]

Mr. Lammy: The Department for Constitutional Affairs' expenditure in the 2002–03 financial year for asylum and immigration was £277 million. This covers the costs incurred by the Immigration Appellate Authority and the Courts and, legal aid administered by the Legal Services Commission. Of this we estimate approximately £244 million was attributable to asylum and the remainder to non-asylum immigration work.

Judicial Appointments

Keith Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many judicial appointments the Lord Chancellor made in November and December 2003; whom he appointed; and to which posts. [146962]

Mr. Leslie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor made, or recommended to Her Majesty and/or the Prime Minister, 162 judicial appointments during November and December 2003. A table detailing the names of those appointed, and the post they were appointed to, will be forwarded to my hon. Friend and a copy placed in the House of Commons Library.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many Law Lords he has appointed since 12 June 2003. [146963]

Mr. Leslie: Since 12 June 2003, the Prime Minister has recommended, following advice from my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, the appointment of three Lords of Appeal in Ordinary. The Queen has approved the Prime Minister's recommendations and all three Lords of Appeal have been appointed.

Judicial Review

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what has been the average time taken in the last year for an application for leave to move to judicial review to be determined. [146493]

Mr. Leslie: For the period 1 December 2002 to 30 November 2003 the average times taken to determine applications for permission to apply for judicial review from the date of issue of proceedings to the date of determination are as follows.

For determination on the papers only:

Civil matters—7.3 weeks[1]

Criminal matters—6.3 weeks[1]

Where the judge directs that he wishes to consider permission at an oral hearing:

Civil matters—10 weeks[1]

Criminal matters—5.2 weeks[1]

Should the application subsequently be renewed following refusal on the papers, the average waiting times from receipt of the application for renewal to the date of determination is:

Civil matters—6.4 weeks[1]

Criminal matters—9.5 weeks[1]

[1] The average figures include any time that cases may be stood out of the list pending determination of lead cases or other matters.

Justice System (Costs)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what the cost of the justice system was in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 1997, *(c)* 1999, *(d)* 2001 and *(e)* 2003; and what the projected cost is in 2004–05. [146677]

Mr. Lammy: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Written Constitution

Keith Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy on a written constitution. [146964]

Mr. Leslie: There are no plans to draft a written constitution for the United Kingdom.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Licensing Act

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will amend the Licensing Act 1964 to allow on-duty police officers to be served with refreshments; and if she will make a statement. [146572]

Mr. Caborn: Section 178(b) of the Licensing Act 1964 makes it an offence for the holder of a justices' licence to supply any liquor or refreshment, whether by way of gift or sale, to any constable on duty except by authority of a superior officer of the constable. Schedule 7 to the Licensing Act 2003, which received Royal Assent on 10 July 2003, will repeal the Licensing Act 1964 in its entirety, when it comes into force. Therefore, this provision of the 1964 Act will be repealed when the 2003 Act is fully in force.

18-Plus Organisation

Chris Bryant: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what funding her Department and its executive agencies has provided to the 18-Plus organisation since 1997. [147352]

Mr. Caborn: There is no record of the Department or its executive agency providing any funding to the 18-plus organisation.

Tourism

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what initiatives have been put in place by her Department to attract foreign visitors to UK attractions outside London. [147251]

Mr. Caborn: VisitBritain has a target in its Funding Agreement with my Department to promote a regional spread of overseas visitors to the UK. Major initiatives include a partnership campaign with the industry in the United States and, in Europe, a £4 million "City Breaks" campaign to promote short breaks in 19 cities across Britain. The Department also contributes funding (£250,000 p.a from 2002–06) to the Greater London Authority to help support its statutory duty of promoting London as a Gateway to the rest of the UK.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what initiatives have been put in place by her Department to increase domestic tourism visits in 2004. [147252]

Mr. Caborn: In November 2003, VisitBritain published its domestic marketing strategy. This is a three-year initiative designed to grow the value of the domestic market by encouraging the British to spend more on tourism throughout the English regions throughout the year. On 1 January 2004, VisitBritain launched its Enjoy England Spring Campaign which consists of a high profile television and press campaign and offers a holiday planner so that people can plan their domestic trips for the year. This will be followed up by a number of themed campaigns throughout the year and another major campaign in September. Information on the Enjoy England Spring Campaign can be found on the website: www.visitengland.com.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Bankruptcy

Hugh Bayley: To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners whether the Church Commissioners have made representations to the Government about changing the law to enable the courts to declare bankrupt a cathedral or other church or body that becomes unable to pay its debts. [146236]

Sir Stuart Bell: The Church Commissioners have made no representations to the Government about the present state of the relevant law.

Bradford Cathedral

Hugh Bayley: To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners discussions the Church Commissioners have had about the financial position of Bradford cathedral and its failure to pay its debts to Past Forward and other small businesses for the work they were contracted to provide for the Life Force Exhibition; and what action the Church Commissioners intend to take to ensure that the Cathedral is able to pay to Past Forward the sum specified in the county court judgment issued against the cathedral. [146237]

Sir Stuart Bell: Legally and financially, cathedrals are independent bodies governed by the Cathedrals Measure passed by Parliament in 1999. The Commissioners have a very limited statutory role in relation to cathedrals and have no authority to compel Bradford Cathedral to reach a settlement, nor do they have power to provide funds to enable such a settlement.

Nonetheless they are in contact with the Bradford Cathedral Chapter and recognise that efforts are being made to find a solution.

McClean Review

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners if he will make a statement on the first report of the McClean Review of clergy terms of service to the Archbishops' Council. [146835]

Sir Stuart Bell: The group's first report was considered by the Archbishops' Council on 9 December. It recommends that employment rights covered by section 23 of the Employment Relations Act should be conferred on the clergy through church legislation. The report will be debated in February by the General Synod, which will be invited to encourage comments on its recommendations from dioceses and other interested parties.

A copy of the report will be sent to the DTI soon.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Animal By-products

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with the European Commission regarding further derogation from the Animal By-products Regulation 2003. [147001]

Mr. Bradshaw: The United Kingdom, along with all member states, has recently submitted information on the application of the EU Animal By-products Regulation (1774/2002) to the European Commission, including difficulties faced by operators.

In the light of these comments, the Commission may decide that certain provisions will need to be amended if it is clear that similar issues are occurring in several member states.

We are also in discussion with the Commission regarding a number of supplementary proposals relating to the Animal By-products Regulation.

Judy Mallaber: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the statement of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, of 10 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1173, whether the database of animal by-product premises will be available on her Department's website early this year. [147091]

Mr. Bradshaw: We are currently in the process of compiling the database of animal by-product premises with the intention of placing a list of approved premises

on the Defra website. In the interim period this information can be obtained from local Defra animal health offices (who issue the approvals).

Animal Protection

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what research has been *(a)* undertaken and *(b)* commissioned by her Department on (i) illegal animal movements, (ii) illegal culling of wildlife and (iii) illegal hunting of protected species. [146567]

Mr. Bradshaw: It is not apparent from the question whether my colleague's interest relates to research into wild native species, exotic non-native species or agricultural animals. The answer below therefore reflects the wide range of activities that Defra undertakes.

(i) Illegal animal movements

The Animal Movement Licensing System (AMLS) highlights any reports of potentially illegal movements of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs so that local authority Trading Standards Officers can investigate them and take any necessary enforcement action.

(ii) Illegal culling of wildlife

The Department has not specifically undertaken or commissioned research into the illegal culling of wildlife. However, an assessment was made of the potential impact of this activity on certain birds of prey raptors as part of the UK Raptor Working Group, chaired by Defra (then DETR) and the JNCC, which reported in 2000.

(iii) Illegal hunting

The Department's responsibilities include protection of wildlife through regulation of trade in those endangered species listed on the Appendices to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species). Research has been commissioned to contribute to an assessment of the impact of exploitation, especially by poaching and illegal trade, on the conservation status of the CITES listed musk deer in the far east of the Russian Federation and to inform future conservation management.

Through the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) the Department supports the network of Police Wildlife Crime Officers, which investigate reports of illegal culling and other breaches of wildlife law.

In addition to our support of the Police, the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIiS) investigates suspicious wildlife deaths in relation to the misuse, abuse and approved use of pesticides. The scheme is run by the Pesticides Safety Directorate and funded by government and through a levy on the pesticides industry.

Animal Welfare

Mr. David: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to introduce measures to make stunning compulsory before animals are ritually slaughtered; and what assessment she has made of the case for such measures. [147175]

Mr. Bradshaw: We are in the process of assessing all the recommendations in the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the welfare of red meat animals at slaughter, including the recommendation that all animals should be stunned prior to slaughter. We are planning to issue our draft response to the report for public consultation shortly.

Bio-Yoghurt

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the implications for bio yoghurt of the EU directive on yoghurt classification; and what representations she has received on the new arrangements. [145731]

Mr. Bradshaw: I assume that the hon. Member refers to the provision in Commission proposal COM(2003)14 which would amend Article 2 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 relating to standards for organic production. The proposal is intended to restrict the labelling of food with the term 'bio' to food which complies with the organic standards. The Explanatory Memoranda submitted on this proposal explain our view that the proposal to amend Article 2 is unnecessarily restrictive but note that it commands widespread support among other member states. Representations on the proposal have been received from a number of interests, most recently from the Dairy Industry Association Ltd., the British Retail Consortium and the Provision Trade Federation.

I refer the hon. Member also to the reply given by the Secretary of State for Health on 19 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 916W, in relation to the separate discussions on possible EU legislation on the composition and labelling of yogurt.

Chewing Gum

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the outcome of her Department's discussions with manufacturers and other interested parties about discarded chewing gum was; what changes to her policy on discarded chewing gum she has made and plans to make; and if she will make a statement. [146361]

Alun Michael: The group is considering a range of options for tackling the problem and intend to make recommendations to me shortly. I will then decide what steps should be taken and an announcement made. We are working closely with all interested parties through an action group which includes representatives of, Defra, the Department for Education and Skills, ENCAMS (formerly the Tidy Britain Group), chewing gum manufacturers, the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, to progress effective and sustainable ways of tackling it.

Environment Agency

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the Environment Agency's total expenditure has been since its formation; and how much has been spent on collecting and refining statistics on waste. [142594]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency's total expenditure since its formation has been £4,484.3 million.

The Environment Agency has spent a estimated £5 million on collecting and refining waste statistics from its surveys on the production and management of waste from industry and commerce. This figure does not include waste statistics collected by the Agency as part of its regulatory duties.

Fallen Stock

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what percentage of farmers have signed up to the proposed national subscription scheme for the disposal of fallen stock. [147000]

Mr. Bradshaw: Good progress is being made in setting up the Scheme and farmers will be invited to subscribe to it shortly.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment she has made of the cost of the proposed national subscription scheme for the disposal of fallen stock. [147002]

Mr. Bradshaw: Initial estimates of costs for the collection and disposal of all fallen stock in the UK, excluding those disposed of under TSE testing arrangements are likely to be around £28 million per year. However, the proposed National Fallen Stock Scheme will be voluntary, and as not all farmers will choose to subscribe, costs may be lower. Exact costs will depend on the rates of payments to collection and disposal operators which are currently being determined, and the volume of fallen stock which comes forward which is unknown.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress her Department has made on the national subscription scheme for the disposal of fallen stock. [147003]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra, in co-operation with devolved administrations, the individuals nominated as Directors of the National Fallen Stock Company and other key stakeholders are making good progress in setting up the Scheme. We hope to be able to make an announcement on the start date shortly.

Fish Farming

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much food, by weight, is required to produce one kilo of marketable farmed salmon; how much raw marine resource, by weight, is required to make one kilo of fish food; where that food is sourced from; and what the content of that food is. [146712]

Mr. Bradshaw: Defra does not collect data on feed usage and composition from enterprises engaged in fish farming in the UK. However, industry estimates range from 1.0 to 1.3 kg of feed needed to produce 1 kg of farmed salmon of a marketable size.

We do not have information on the weight of the raw marine material used in feed for farmed fish. The quantity involved will vary depending on the proportion of fishmeal used in the different grades of dry fish feed produced for fish at various stages of growth. Salmon, like other farmed piscivorous species, are unlikely to consume, through feed, more natural marine resources than would their wild counterparts in the natural environment.

The fish used for aquaculture feed are generally small, bony pelagic species sourced from non food grade fisheries, usually off the coasts of Peru and Chile, and in the North Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea.

We understand that feed for farmed salmon includes protein and oils derived from marine sources, limited amounts of vegetable proteins, small amounts of carbohydrates to aid pellet formation, minerals and vitamins.

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much farmed salmon has been produced from the United Kingdom salmon farms over the last 10 years. [146713]

Mr. Bradshaw: Production figures of UK Atlantic Salmon (tonnes) for the 10-year period up to 2002 (the latest year for which complete data are available) are as follows:

	Tonnes
1993	48,691
1994	64,066
1995	70,060
1996	83,121
1997	99,197
1998	110,784
1999	126,686
2000	128,959
2001	138,519
2002	145,609

The figures include production primarily for human consumption, with some production for restocking.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many salmon farms operate in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each region. [146970]

Mr. Bradshaw: There are 530 salmon farms operating in the UK as follows:

Scotland: 504
England: 18
Wales: 7
Northern Ireland: 1

Fisheries

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the escape characteristic is that cod have for avoiding towed fishing gear. [146715]

Mr. Bradshaw: There is little published information on this in the scientific literature, but what there is, suggests that avoidance of fishing gear by cod is largely a visual response. The escape characteristic of cod will vary between day and night, with avoidance being in either a vertical or a horizontal direction. Generally, fishing gears are rigged to reduce such escapements. In the case of bottom gears, for example, the warps tend

to reduce the horizontal movement of fish and the headline is forward of the foot rope to reduce vertical escapement.

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average fruit and vegetable consumption was in the *(a)* 50 most deprived and *(b)* 50 most affluent wards in England in the last year for which figures are available; and what the average for England was. [145986]

Mr. Bradshaw: Data from the Expenditure and Food Survey on fruit and vegetable consumption is not available at ward level. However, fruit and vegetable consumption is available by income quintile for households in the United Kingdom for the 12 months from April 2001 to March 2002.

Average consumption of fruit and vegetables in the 20 per cent. of households with the lowest incomes was 2,622g per person per week, compared to 3,651g per person per week in the 20 per cent. of households with the highest incomes.

Average consumption of fruit and vegetables per person in the UK

Grams per person per week	*Household income*	
	Lowest 20 per cent.	*Highest 20 per cent.*
Fruit and vegetables	2,622	3,651
Fruit and vegetables[1]	1,667	2,947

[1] Excluding potatoes

GM Crops

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of whether the pesticide regimes which may be approved for the cultivation of Chardon LL maize will be more aggressive than the regime adopted in the farm scale evaluation trials. [146619]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* Under Directive 2001/18/EC, the management practices associated with the cultivation of GM crops must be assessed for their environmental impact. Consequently, my Department will seek advice from the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) as to whether the evidence provided by applicants about the specific management practices associated with a GM crop present an increased likelihood of adversely affecting the environment as compared to conventional practices associated with the cultivation of its non-GM counterpart. It would also be within the scope of Directive 2001/18/EC to include conditions to the consent that circumscribed the herbicide regime permitted, if this was felt to be appropriate. The farm scale evaluations provide important data with respect to current management practices, which will be invaluable in making this assessment.

The data from the farm scale evaluation trials will, alongside other relevant data, also be considered as part of the scientific evaluation of any application for a commercial level of approval for the use of glufosinate ammonium on Chardon LL maize. Only if Ministers are satisfied, on the basis of the expert advice of the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides, that the particular use as proposed by the applicant on the draft product label is safe to people and the environment will approval be granted.

Mrs. Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Government's investigations have produced evidence to indicate that GM technology should now be released commercially. [146998]

Mr. Morley: Under Directive 2001/18/EC each application to release GM crops for commercial importation or cultivation is judged on a case-by-case basis according to the scientific evidence of any risks it may pose to human health or the environment. A person or company wishing to market such a GM crop must supply a detailed dossier of information including an environmental risk assessment on that GM crop. This information is open to scrutiny by all 15 member states and the European Commission, and an EU-wide public consultation must be held. In considering any application, the Government will consider all relevant evidence including results of its own investigations, for example including the Farm Scale Evaluations. No GM crop may be imported or grown commercially unless and until EU member states have agreed collectively under qualified majority procedures that it is safe. Once a GMO has the suitable consent, it can be imported and, if the consent conditions permit, cultivated within the EU, subject to other applicable legislation on seeds, pesticides and novel food and (animal) feed. No GM crop currently has all the required approvals for UK cultivation.

Mrs. Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with insurance providers for non GM farmers who might be commercially damaged by GM contamination. [146999]

Mr. Morley: We have not had any discussions with insurance providers on this subject. The Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission has submitted a report to the Government on co-existence and liability issues in relation to GM crops and we are now considering this very carefully.

Flooding

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures can be taken to alleviate the contamination from sewers and septic tanks which take place after groundwater flooding. [146227]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency works closely with local authorities, water companies and other groups to ensure that the effects of flooding are, as far as possible, minimised. Proper maintenance and siting of sewers and septic tanks, and monitoring of groundwater levels, can help reduce the risks, though during a flood event itself there is little that can practically be done apart from ensuring that any sewage pumping does not contribute to contamination, that the situation is properly monitored, and that those affected are informed of the situation and risks. The Department has been working with the Environment Agency and others to produce a groundwater protection code of practice

on septic tanks and other non-mains sewerage systems and public consultation on a draft will commence shortly.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list information technology contracts in her Department and its predecessors with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146192]

Alun Michael: The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs was established as a new Department in June 2001. At its inception, the Department novated existing MAFF framework contracts set up in 1999 with three major suppliers, Fujitsu, Sema UK Ltd. and Sungard Sherwood Systems Group Ltd. who have provided consultants to work with in-house staff for system development. No single system has cost of more than £20 million.

The Rural Payments Agency signed a £35 million seven year contract with Accenture on 31 January 2003 for the development of systems to deliver payments to farmers and traders under the Common Agricultural Policy. The systems are still in the development phase and are scheduled to become operational during 2005, after which the contract allows for a period of support and maintenance.

Nanotechnology

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much her Department is spending on the assessment of possible environmental impacts resulting from the release of nanotechnology products into the environment, with particular reference to ultra-fine particles. [147225]

Mr. Morley: The Department does not currently fund any research into assessment of the possible environmental impacts resulting from the release of specifically nanotechnology-based products into the environment. Most regulation to protect the environment is based on product or use categories and would therefore cover such a release, whether or not based on nanotechnology.

However, in order to find out whether the technology raises new ethical, health and safety, environmental or social issues that have not already been covered by current regulations, last year the Department of Trade and Industry commissioned the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering to conduct an independent study to look at current and future developments in nanotechnology. We will examine carefully the conclusions of this study, expected in spring this year, to see whether there are any gaps that will need to be filled.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what *(a)* environmental and *(b)* toxicological data is held by her Department in respect of carbon nanotubes present in consumer goods. [147227]

Mr. Morley: No such data is held by the Department.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the application of the precautionary principle to the decision on whether to impose a moratorium on the release into the environment of ultra-fine particles generated through nanotechnology processes. [147236]

Mr. Morley: Precautionary action must be based on objective assessments of the costs and benefits of action. The precautionary principle does not mean that we only permit activities if we are sure that serious harm will not arise, or there is proof that the benefits outweigh all possible risks. Most regulation to protect the environment is based on product or use categories and would therefore cover such a release, whether or not based on nanotechnology processes. We therefore do not consider that there is currently a case for a blanket moratorium on such releases, but we are keeping this under review, in particular via the independent study being carried out for the Department of Trade and Industry by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Sewage Treatment Works

Ann Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the progress of the consultation on Statutory Control of Odour and Other Nuisances from Sewage Treatment Works; and when the White paper will be published. [146322]

Alun Michael: The Government is awaiting the outcome of the House of Lords appeal case following a High Court ruling that odours from sewage treatment works can be dealt with as a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Government will announce its response to the consultation and its approach following the House of Lords ruling and the outcome of the concurrent National Assembly of Wales consultation regarding sewage treatment works. There are no plans to issue a White paper on this matter.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum appeals determined by adjudicators in the second quarter of 2003 were dismissed; and how many of those whose appeals were dismissed have been removed from the UK. [140572]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 1 December 2003]:* The available information requested is given in the following table and relates to appeals determined at the Immigration Appellate Authority. Some applicants whose appeal is dismissed may still be awaiting the outcome of further appeals—some appellants apply for

leave to appeal to the Tribunal, and a proportion of these are granted leave followed by determinations by the Tribunal. Data on the number who have been removed after their appeals rights have been exhausted is only available at a disproportionate cost by examination of individual case files.

Information on asylum applications and other asylum statistics is published quarterly. The most recent publication covering the third quarter of 2003 is now available on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html

Asylum appeals determined by adjudicators of the Immigration appellate authority, excluding dependants[1,2]

Number of principal appellants

	Appeals determined by adjudicators						
		Allowed[3]		*Dismissed*[3]		*Withdrawn*[3]	
	Total determined[4]	*Total*	*As percentage of total determined*	*Total*	*As percentage of total determined*	*Total*	*As percentage of total determined*
2002							
Q1	14,010	3,165	23	10,500	75	340	2
Q2	15,525	3,450	22	11,715	75	360	2
03	18,260	3,935	22	13,825	76	495	3
Q4	16,615	3,320	20	12,805	77	490	3
2002 total	64,405	13,875	22	48,845	76	1,685	3
2003							
01	20,595	3,480	17	16,445	80	670	3
Q2	19,345	4,060	21	14,875	77	415	2
Q3	21,500	4,270	20	16,805	78	420	2
Most recent three months							
July	8,195	1,655	20	6,375	78	165	2
August	6,740	1,320	20	5,275	78	145	2
September	6,565	1,295	20	5,155	79	110	2

[1] Figures (other than percentages) rounded to the nearest five. Numbers might not add up due to rounding.
[2] Data for 2002 and 2003 are provisional.
[3] Based on data supplied from the Presenting Officers Unit within the Home Office.
[4] Based on information supplied by the Department for Constitutional Affairs. Determinations do not necessarily relate to appeals received in the same period.

Cheadle Royal Hospital

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, before laying the statutory instrument relating to Cheadle Royal hospital which is being prepared in his Department, he will take steps to satisfy himself that all the income received by the charity has been applied to the properly authorised charitable purposes. [145328]

Fiona Mactaggart *[holding answer 5 January 2003]:* I confirmed in my answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 766W, that neither the Charity Commission nor the Greater Manchester police have found evidence of charitable income or assets being inappropriately used by the trustees of Cheadle Royal Hospital. A copy of the proposed new statutory instrument has been forwarded to the hon. Member and her comments requested by 9 January to support the progress of the instrument and enable the release of the funds of the charity to be used for the public benefit.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, before laying the statutory instrument relating to Cheadle Royal hospital which is being prepared in his Department, he will take steps to satisfy himself that all the assets of this charity have been sold or reassigned in accordance with charity law, and in particular with section 36(8) of the Charities Act 1993. [145773]

Fiona Mactaggart: I confirmed in my answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 766W, that neither the Charity Commission nor the Greater Manchester police have found evidence of charitable assets being inappropriately used by the trustees of Cheadle Royal hospital.

Church of England

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what power the Charity Commission has to remove charitable status from Church of England bodies; and in what circumstances this would apply. [146235]

Fiona Mactaggart: This is a matter for the Charity Commission as the government department responsible for the regulation of charities in England and Wales. The Chief Charity Commissioner will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter dated 18 September from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mr. M. J. Sattler, transferred from the Secretary of State for the Home Department to the Office for National Statistics. [141583]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to my right hon. Friend on 8 January 2004.

Documents

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what definition he will use of the term reasonable explanation for failing to produce documents; and whether he intends to include a definition in relevant legislation. [143473]

Beverley Hughes: Ultimately it will be for the courts to define what constitutes a reasonable excuse for the purpose of the offence set out in clause 2 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of claimants etc) Bill. However, the offence explicitly rules out certain defences which are not to be considered as reasonable causes for no longer being in possession of a document. The defence does not include reference to other legislation.

DORE Achievement Centres

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the results of the DORE achievement centres and dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit treatment programme at Balsall Common School; and what plans he has to extend the programme to other schools. [146171]

Margaret Hodge: The dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention disorder treatment (DDAT) is one of a number of commercially available programmes designed to support children with specific learning difficulties. It is for parents, individual schools and local education authorities to decide whether a given technique has something to offer an individual child in the light of his or her particular needs. The Department has no plans to extend the programme to other schools but officials are meeting with representatives of the Dore achievement centres/DDAT to receive an update.

Foreign Language Students (Fees)

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances foreign language students on *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time English language courses will be required to pay the proposed surcharge; and if he will make a statement. [143839]

Beverley Hughes: No decisions have yet been made about the level of the fees. The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is required to provide a range of fees for indicative purposes only. The upper limit of that range, £500, does not signify that the Government intends, as some newspapers suggested, to set fees at that level.

The enabling power is the first stage of a two-stage process. The second part of the process is to undertake a full Regulatory Impact Assessment and wider consultation with key stakeholders. Following this consultation, decisions regarding fee levels, scope and timing of introduction can then be made taking these views fully into account.

Any foreign language student, full or part-time, who currently pays a fee would be required to pay charges at whatever level they may be set.

Senior Departmental Posts

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [146005]

Fiona Mactaggart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) on 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 488W.

Youth Sales Restrictions

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to assist *(a)* tobacconists, *(b)* alcohol retailers and *(c)* publicans in determining the age of customers where restrictions on sales exist; and if he will make a statement. [145327]

Beverley Hughes: The Government's plans for a national identity cards scheme would provide a nationally accepted, useful and secure way of proving and determining age. Our current best cost estimates would fund the issuing of cards free to all 16-year-olds.

In the shorter term, we have a strong interest in initiatives like the British Retail Consortium's Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) which establishes a common standard for issuing the various proof of age cards that are available.

Officials have worked closely with the British Retail Consortium to ensure the PASS scheme is as effective as possible. We have endorsed the scheme with ministerial involvement at its launch event last year and we continue to take steps to promote it such as including details of schemes that are PASS accredited on the Home Office website and providing a representative to sit on the PASS Board as an observer.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Child Care

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what *(a)* measures are in place and *(b)* measures are proposed to encourage fathers to share caring responsibilities for their children. [146260]

Jacqui Smith: The Government is committed to helping provide parents with more opportunities than ever before to balance work and family life. In April 2003, we introduced new laws for working parents which cover fathers as well as mothers, including the right for parents of children aged under six or disabled children under 18 to request flexible working, adoption leave available to men and women, and the right to two weeks paid paternity leave for fathers. These new rights together with the existing rights to parental leave and time off for dependents recognise that men increasingly want to play a greater role in sharing caring responsibilities for their children, and gives them more choices for doing so.

To encourage take-up of the new rights, the Government is running an ongoing awareness raising campaign which includes national newspaper adverts

targeted specifically at fathers, and is working in partnership with a number of key stakeholders such as Fathers Direct. The Government's Work-Life balance campaign also encourages employers to adopt best practice and provide family-friendly working practices right across the workforce.

The Children Act Sub-Committee, working to the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Board on Family Law, published a report "Making Contact Work", which amongst other issues highlights paternal responsibilities in caring for children. The Government is currently considering recommendations arising from the report, and plans to respond in full as soon as possible.

The Family Support Grant has provided funding for a number of projects over the last five years to encourage fathers to become actively involved in the care of their children. These have included supporting the Active Dads programme, which assists a range of joint father/child activities rolled out through the Community Education Development Centre (now ContinYou), and helping organisations such as Fathers Direct provide support and guidance to fathers and professionals working with them.

Pension Provision

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Minister for Women what recent assessment has been made of women's pension provision. [146253]

Malcolm Wicks: I have been asked to reply.

"Simplicity, Security and Choice: Working and Saving for Retirement" Cm 5677, dedicated a chapter to assessing the state of women's pension provision.

The unique pension position of women is now being considered in all the projects that followed on from the Green Paper, such as the Informed Choice programme and the Extending Working Lives programme.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Safety

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what access is provided to international nuclear safeguards inspectors to *(a)* military nuclear facilities and *(b)* military nuclear materials, under the provisions of the protocol additional to the agreement between the United Kingdom and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the application of safeguards in the United Kingdom in connection with the Treaty on The Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. [147022]

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply to this question since nuclear safeguards and implementation of the protocol additional to the UK/Euratom/IAEA Safeguards Agreement (Cm 4282), which is not yet in force, are the responsibility of my Department.

Under the terms of the UK additional protocol the IAEA could request access to any location in the UK, including military nuclear facilities, where such access will contribute to increasing the IAEA's capability to detect undeclared nuclear material and activities in a non-nuclear weapon State. If necessary, access may be managed in accordance with Article 7 of the protocol. If access to the requested location cannot be granted, then every reasonable effort must be made to satisfy the IAEA's requirements, without delay, at adjacent locations or through other means. Neither the Safeguards Agreement nor the additional protocol apply to nuclear material required for national security reasons.

Advantage West Midlands

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the recent decision by Advantage West Midlands not to support regeneration initiatives in Kington; and what estimate she has made of the effect on the amount of Objective 2 funding available. [142589]

Jacqui Smith: Advantage West Midlands has created Regeneration Zones to maximise local input on regeneration issues. The Regeneration Zone Board considers which projects to support within the resources available. The number of competing projects was such that a package of projects in Kington was not put forward to Advantage West Midlands for funding.

Objective 2 funding is still available to these projects if Kington can find alternative match funding. I am assured that Advantage West Midlands and Government Office officials will work with Kington to seek alternative funding sources.

Kington has received extra support from Advantage West Midlands. It was one of the first six market towns identified for support through the regional market towns programme, which began in 2001. The Programme in Kington allows for support from the Countryside Agency for a market towns support officer, and up to £300,000 from Advantage West Midlands for a package of projects developed by the local partnership, Kington Partnership. It is in the second year of a four year programme, and has drawn down £94, 607 from Advantage West Midlands to support 11 different projects to date.

In addition to the market towns partnership, Advantage West Midlands has taken forward other project work directly in Kington with local partners. This includes the purchase of the old Kington Cottage Hospital and conversion into a Youth Hostel working with the Youth Hostel Association. Advantage West Midlands has also worked up plans with Herefordshire council to renovate the local Wesleyan Chapel for wider community use.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will reply to the letter to her dated 27 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Angela Bottomley. [147619]

Ms Hewitt: I replied to my right hon. Friend on 9 January.

Departmental Grants

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funding her Department provides for

(a) enterprise grants that are delivered to businesses in the regions by the Small Business Service, *(b)* the STEP programme, *(c)* the Faraday Partnership scheme and *(d)* the Manufacturing Advisory scheme in each year since inception of the scheme; what timescale applies to the funding in each case; and if she will make a statement on the extent to which businesses have benefited from each initiative. [145483]

Nigel Griffiths: The information is as follows:

(a) Enterprise Grants

Enterprise Grants are available to small and medium-sized businesses based in the Enterprise Grant Areas of England. Projects can involve expanding, modernising or restructuring an existing business, or setting up a new one. The maximum grant available is £75,000 on projects with up to £500,000 capital investment.

The Enterprise Grant scheme was allocated a budget of £45 million between January 2000 and March 2003. The scheme deadline has been extended to March 2004 and in England, to date, small businesses have benefited from the scheme as follows:

	Expenditure (£)
2000–01	3,758,000
2001–02	10,200,000
2002–03	11,800,000

The report covering the Regional Selective Assistance scheme, was undertaken in 2002 and found that businesses who benefited from Enterprise Grant were able to invest in projects that enabled them to increase their productivity and profitability and raise their skills levels, in areas of England that would not normally attract capital investment. By offering a grant of 15 per cent., we encourage private investment covering 85 per cent. of the capital investment costs, again in areas that traditionally struggle to gain investment finance.

(b) STEP

For STEP (the Shell Technology Enterprise Programme), DTI has contributed approximately £0.68 million in 2003–04 and intends to fund STEP at about this level in 2004–05. An exit survey of businesses that participated in STEP in 2003 showed that:

94 per cent. of host company managers stated that their STEP project would have a positive impact on their business's future performance;

94 per cent. said their expectations had been met or exceeded (38 per cent. exceeded);

89 per cent. of companies believe the benefits of their STEP project either equalled or exceeded the cost of taking part; and

68 per cent. thought the project contributed to new processes or procedures within their business.

(c) Faraday Partnerships

Faraday Partnerships aim to bring new products and processes, based on the UK science base, to the market more effectively. DTI and the Research Councils support 23 of the 24 Faraday Partnerships: the other is supported by the Scottish Executive and Defra.

DTI spend on Faraday Partnerships to date has been:

	Expenditure (£)
2000–01	1,915,311
2001–02	3,351,631
2002–03	5,903,343
2003–04[1]	2,904,500
Total	14,074,786

[1] First two quarters.

Based on a five-year business plan, DTI offers each Faraday Partnership up to £400,000 per year for an initial three years. Subject to an interim review of the Partnership's progress, further support may be made available, but on a tapered basis.

In 2002–03, Faraday Partnerships managed research portfolios totalling over £101 million; over 1,700 firms and nearly 400 University research teams are actively involved.

Initial studies of the impact of the Faraday Partnerships on business have revealed the following generic effects:

more focussed application of research results to new products in many fields;

greater understanding of global competitiveness and winning new business;

opportunities for SMEs to work with universities and large firms;

improvements in manufacturing efficiency and marketing; and

new networks linking businesses and researchers.

(d) Manufacturing Advisory Service

The Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) was launched in April 2002. The Department's funding commitment is £15 million over the period 2001–02 to 2004–05, as follows:

	£ million
2001–02	3
2002–03	5
2003–04	5
2004–05	2

Of this sum, £13.75 million is provided to the English Regional Development Agencies and Welsh Development Agency as part-funding for the 10 Regional Centres for Manufacturing Excellence through which the service is delivered. The remainder of the Department's funding has supported the development of a complementary network of centres of expertise in manufacturing, a national website, and other essential central functions.

The DTI sees the MAS as a real success as a major source of advice and support for manufacturers. Since it was launched, the MAS has handled over 15,000 inquiries. Over 4,500 manufacturing firms have benefited from MAS diagnostic consultations and over 1,000 have gone on to undertake in-depth projects to drive up their productivity and competitiveness. Latest figures show that the total added value to UK firms using the service is approaching £30 million.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funding her Department has provided for *(a)* the Advanced Metals Technology Initiative, *(b)* the Technology Review grant scheme for small businesses,

(c) the Innovation and Technology Programme for small businesses and *(d)* the Development Projects grant scheme in each year since inception of the scheme; what timescale applies to the funding in each case; and if she will make a statement on the timescale to which this funding applies and estimate the extent to which businesses have benefited from each initiative. [145488]

Nigel Griffiths: The following information is as follows:

(a) Advanced Metals Technology Initiative

The Advanced Metals Technology Initiative effectively started in September 2003. The DTI is providing funding of £2.5 million over a three year period, up to December 2006, to AMTI. As the project has only recently started it is too early to estimate the extent to which businesses have benefited.

(b) and *(d)* Technology Reviews and Development Projects

Technology Reviews were introduced in 1999 along with Technology Studies as additional elements of the Smart scheme. The funding provision for these elements was not shown separately from the rest of Smart but expenditure for these two elements was originally forecast to rise to some £2.8 million a year. These elements were withdrawn in May 2003 following the review of DTI business support.

Development Project grants were another element of Smart and the funding provision and payments for this element were not shown separately. This element has now been subsumed within the new Grant for Research and Development which was introduced in June 2003 following the review of DTI business support.

The overall funding provision for Smart and the benefits to small and medium sized businesses in terms of grant payment outturn were as follows:

£ million

	Total Smart outturn	*Technology Reviews and Studies outturn*
1997–98	25.8	-
1998–99	24.9	-
1999–2000	26.5	2
2000–01	27.3	154
2001–02	23.7	462
2002–03	32.1	711

An evaluation of the Smart scheme as a whole was undertaken in 2001 (the Review element of Smart was briefly touched upon as it had only just been introduced). At the time the research was undertaken annual turnover in the economy was nearly £500 million higher than it would have been without the scheme. It is also estimated that annual exports were nearly £270 million higher and employment was more than 8,000 higher.

Almost all award winners said that their projects had improved their technological knowledge/skills. Large majorities also reported quality improvements, increased investment in R and D/innovation, and an improved market position. Four in ten winners had sought further finance to enable them to introduce their products into the market. The majority of these thought that the Smart award had enabled them to do so. A copy of the full evaluation is available at www.dti.gov.uk/about/evaluation *(c)* Innovation and Technology Programme for small businesses

The DTI does not operate a programme under this name, but does provide support for small businesses to develop innovation and technology, such as Grant for Research and Development and Grant for Investigating an Innovative Idea.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funding has been provided by her Department to finance *(a)* the Manufacturing Advisory Service, *(b)* the Community Development Venture Fund and *(c)* the Supply Chain Groups initiative since the inception of each scheme; what timescale applies to the funding in each case; and if she will make a statement on the extent to which businesses have benefited from each initiative. [145511]

Jacqui Smith: The following information is as follows:

(a) Manufacturing Advisory Service

The Manufacturing Advisory Service was launched in April 2002. The Department's funding commitment is £15 million over the period 2001–02 to 2004–05, as follows:

2001–02—£3 million
2002–03—£5 million
2003–04—£5 million
2004–05—£2 million

Of this sum, £13.75 million is provided to the English Regional Development Agencies and Welsh Development Agency as part-funding for the ten Regional Centres for Manufacturing Excellence through which the service is delivered. The remainder of the Department's funding has supported the development of a complementary network of centres of expertise in manufacturing, a national website, and other essential central functions.

The MAS has been a real success as a major source of advice and support for manufacturers. Since it was launched, the MAS has handled over 15,000 inquiries. Over 4,500 manufacturing firms have benefited from MAS diagnostic consultations and over 1,000 have gone on to undertake in-depth projects to drive up their productivity and competitiveness. Latest figures show that the total added value to UK firms using the service is approaching £30 million.

(b) Community Development Venture Fund

The Community Development Venture Fund (CDVF), known as the Bridges Fund, was launched on 14 May 2002 and became fully operational after a fourth and final closing in September 2002.

The Fund is a £40 million fund that was established to provide venture capital finance to viable SMEs with good growth potential in the 25 per cent. most disadvantaged wards in England. The Fund is made up of £20 million from institutional and private sector investors and £20 million from the Government to be invested alongside the private sector investors, through pound for pound matched funding. The Fund is not a Government "scheme": it is a commercially managed venture capital fund in which the Government is an investor alongside other leading private sector investors. The Fund has an investment period of up to nine years

although Bridges Community Ventures Ltd, the Fund Manager, expects most of the fund to be invested by the end of year five.

As at the end of December 2003, the Bridges Fund has invested over £5 million in nine SMEs with growth potential that are located in disadvantaged areas:

	£ million
Financial Year	*Drawn down from DTI*
2002–03	2,175,000
2003–04 (as at 31.12.03)	4,193,395

(c) Supply Chain Group

The Supply Chain Group was launched in April 2003. The DTI plans to spend £15 million over five years and so far has spent £446,372.

The programme will benefit companies throughout the automotive supply chain by providing them with expert help to improve their business. Participants are invited by their industry customer, ensuring that help is targeted to the most significant suppliers. To date, 10 supply chain group projects involving 94 companies have been approved. These are long-term activities and hard data on the improvements achieved will be available towards the end of 2004. The initial feedback from participating companies has been encouraging.

Esarda

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which United Kingdom organisations are members of the European Safeguards Research and Development Association (Esarda); and whether public resources are provided to support participation in Esarda. [147030]

Nigel Griffiths: UK organisations with current membership of the European Safeguards Research and Development Association (Esarda) are BNFL and UKAEA. The DTI provides funding for participation by UKAEA in the Esarda Scientific Council and Co-ordination Board on behalf of the DTI-sponsored UK Safeguards Support Programme to the IAEA. In addition, officials from DTI participate in some meetings of Esarda Committees and specialist Working Groups. Further information on the activities of Esarda can be found on its website: www.jrc.org/esarda/ or www.jrc.cec.eu.int/esarda/

Fireworks

Tony Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made in implementing measures to tackle nuisance caused by fireworks. [146944]

Mr. Sutcliffe: On 22 December the Fireworks Regulations 2003 came into force which made it an offence for those persons under the age of 18 years to possess fireworks in a public place and for persons of any age to possess Category 4 professional fireworks, the largest most powerful type that are used for public displays.

We are currently drafting a regulation to prohibit the supply of air bombs to the public and have begun preliminary consultations on implementing the rest of the Fireworks Act and will publish draft regulations early this year.

Tony Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether new measures to tackle firework nuisance will provide specific protection for vulnerable premises, with particular reference to stables. [146945]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Fireworks Act 2003 does not contain provisions relating directly to the protection of premises. However, the Act does provide that firework regulations may prohibit public displays unless certain conditions are met.

Further, the Act also provides for compulsory training courses for operators of public firework displays which could lessen the chances of a firework straying to cause damage to nearby buildings such as a stable.

Money Laundering

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many financial services companies in the FTSE All-Share list of companies have reported suspected cases of money laundering in each of the last five years; and what estimate has been made of the sums involved. [146149]

Caroline Flint: I have been asked to reply.

Companies suspecting money laundering activity are under various legal obligations to report this to the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS). The information provided is used by law enforcement agencies in fighting crime, including through locating the proceeds of crime with a view to confiscation.

NCIS does not break down reports by reference to whether the reporting institution is listed on the FTSE All-Share list. Since 1999 303 companies in the banking, insurance/life assurance, and securities/investment sectors made reports. The number of reports received was:

	Banks	*Insurance/ Assurance*	*Securities Finance Investment*	*Totals*
1999	7,223	522	108	7,853
2000	10,802	579	160	11,541
2001	18,776	795	215	19,786
2002	37,041	1,011	262	38,314
2003	63,997	1,109	274	65,380
Total	137,839	4,016	1,019	142,874

The growth in reporting is believed to result mainly from the impact of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, an increased regulatory focus on money laundering (in particular relating to the Financial Services Authority's statutory responsibilities), and greater awareness of the issues in the light of the tragic events of 11 September 2001.

NCIS does not keep estimates of the sums involved in the reports received, as although some reports will relate to a specific financial transaction or transactions others

will not involve transactions at all. To illustrate the scale of the sums involved in money laundering, the most recent estimate of the amount laundered annually in the UK is £25 billion.

Post Office

Mr. Colman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will direct the management of the Post Office to extend the consultation period for those Post Office branch closures which it has put out for consultation over the Christmas period by at least two weeks. [146317]

Mr. Timms: Post Office Ltd. carries out its formal public consultation in accordance with the Code of Practice agreed with Postwatch. With the move from individual proposals to area closure proposals by parliamentary constitutency last autumn, the consultation period was extended from four to six weeks.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been made available in each year since 2001–02 to the devolved regions to support post office branches in deprived areas; and how much has been made available for future years. [144804]

Mr. Timms: The funding arrangements and allocations to support post office branches in deprived areas of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Devolved Administrations. I understand that, in December 2002, the Scottish Parliament allocated £2 million for its programme to support post office branches in deprived areas of Scotland.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the six-week public consultation period for closure proposals under the urban network reinvention programme includes *(a)* public holidays, *(b)* Saturdays and *(c)* Sundays. [147272]

Mr. Timms: I understand from Post Office Ltd. that the six-week consultation period for Post Office closures includes public holidays, Saturdays and Sundays.

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many responses were received to the consultation on the proposed closure of Stenhouse Cross Post Office; of these, how many *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed the closure; and when she expects a final decision to be taken on the closure. [144823]

Mr. Timms: Proposals put out to consultation for, and subsequent decisions on, post office closures under the urban network reinvention programme are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Rural Employment

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on employment prospects in rural areas with particular reference to *(a)* environmental management and *(b)* waste control. [146568]

Mr. Timms: There are considerable employment opportunities across rural areas in the UK as a result both of improvements in land and water management (which cover organic food production, agri-environment schemes, national parks and nature protection projects etc.) and more innovative approaches to waste management and treatment (e.g. farm waste-to-energy plants). Furthermore, the role of eco-tourism in stimulating rural jobs, especially from farm diversification, should not be underestimated. However, quantifying these opportunities is challenging and there is only limited evidence available.

Rural Community Enterprises

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on help available to community enterprises operating in rural areas. [146488]

Nigel Griffiths: As 'Social enterprise: a strategy for success' published in July 2002 made clear, social and community enterprises have a major role to play in meeting the needs of rural communities. The recently published Progress report (on implementation of the strategy) includes many measures to support the promotion and development of rural social enterprises. The Business Link network works closely with specialist rural business support organisations and Co-operative Development Agencies.

In addition, DEFRA and the Home Office Active Community Unit recently announced they will provide £10 million over 2004–05 and 2005–06 to support community capacity building and voluntary and community sector infrastructure in rural areas.

Wind Farms

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions her Department has held with representatives of the shipping industry in connection with the expansion of offshore wind farms. [141910]

Mr. Timms: In November 2002, DTI published a consultation document, "Future Offshore", which outlined a strategic approach to the arrangements for site leasing for offshore renewable development. Consultees associated with the shipping industry included the Chamber of Shipping, the Maritime and Coastguards Agency, the Port of London Authority, Associated British Ports, British Ports Association, International Tanker Owners, and the Society of Maritime Industries. Of these, replies were received from the Chamber of Shipping, the Maritime and Coastguards Agency and the Port of London Authority.

Following this consultation, DTI commissioned a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the three strategic areas proposed for the sites of the second round of wind farms in the Future Offshore consultation. Over 400 organisations and individuals were consulted on the SEA. Organisations responding who represent the shipping industry included the Port of London Authority and Trinity Light House Services, the Royal Yachting Association and the Maritime and Coastguards Agency. A summary of the responses to the consultation and the DTI's response to them can be found on the SEA website at: http://www.og.dti.gov.uk/offshore-wind-sea/process/envrepresponse.htm

Decisions on which sites will be granted leases for second round wind farms were announced on 18 December 2003 and took into account an assessment

on impact on shipping at a strategic level. Having been offered a site lease, each developer is required to conduct an environmental impact assessment and associated consultations before development consent can be given.

TREASURY

Employment Statistics

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many residents in each constituency were in work at *(a)* June 1997 and *(b)* the most recent date for which information is available. [146745]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Mr. Brian Wilson, dated 12 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about employment levels in Parliamentary Constituencies. I am replying in his absence. (146745)

The Office for National Statistics publishes employment rates but not levels from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for Parliamentary Constituencies. This information is available on a yearly basis, but not for calendar months. The latest available estimates are for the twelve month period ending February 2002. Estimates of employment rates by constituency can be obtained from the Nomis(r) database which is available in the House of Commons Library.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to sampling variability.

Child Trust Funds

John Barrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many children are expected to benefit from child trust funds in Scotland in each of the next five years, broken down by *(a)* local authority area and *(b)* parliamentary constituency. [144822]

Ruth Kelly: All eligible children born since 1 September 2002 in families awarded child benefit will receive a child trust fund (CTF). Projected birth figures by local authority and parliamentary constituency are not available, although figures for actual births and numbers receiving child benefit are available in the Library of the House. Birth projections for the whole of Scotland, produced by the Government Actuary's Department, are as shown in the following table.

	Birth projection (000s)
2003	52
2004	52
2005	51
2006	51
2007	51

Each of these children will be eligible for a child trust fund. Based on take-up of child benefit, it is estimated that virtually all children born will receive a CTF.

The CTF is intended to encourage parents and children to develop the savings habit. It will ensure that every child, whatever their family background, will have access at the age of 18 when they begin their adult life, to a stock of assets which they can invest in their future.

It will also help children and their parents to understand the benefits of saving and investment and how to engage with financial institutions.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146866]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146882]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146895]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146926]

Mr. Boateng: Sir Michael Lyon's Independent Review of Public Sector Relocation was established by the Chancellor and Deputy Prime Minister to examine the scope for relocating public sector activity, to improve the delivery and efficiency of public services and to benefit regional economies.

Sir Michael's review will be informed by research from King Sturge on suitable alternative locations, and Experian Business Strategies on lessons from previous relocations, and the economic impact of relocation. Summaries of this research will be available shortly on the Treasury website at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

Sir Michael's final report will be published in March 2004 and individual Departments will develop relocation proposals in light of his findings.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of staff employed within his Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145924]

Ruth Kelly: 4.8 per cent. of staff employed by HM Treasury are over 55 years of age. A total of three (1 per cent.) staff recruited in the last 12 months (1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003) are over 55 years of age.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147295]

Ruth Kelly: In June 2003 the Prime Minister and the Chancellor both said that the Government will campaign on a pro-Europe platform to make the case for Europe and the principled case for the euro.

Since then the Chancellor and other Ministers, have held a variety of meetings to discuss the euro in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Independent Financial Advisers

Mrs. May: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many independent financial advisers were regulated by the Financial Services Authority in each of the last three years. [147038]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services Authority informs me that these figures are not available.

Mrs. May: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the impact on independent financial advisers of compliance with Financial Services Authority requirements. [147039]

Ruth Kelly: Ministers and civil servants receive representations from a wide variety of members of the financial services community. As with previous Administrations, it is not this Government's practice to provide details of all such representations.

Under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, the Financial Services Authority is obliged to consult publicly on all new regulatory requirements. The FSA has specific mechanisms in place to seek the views of consumers and practitioners, including small firms.

Mrs. May: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on *(a)* independent financial advisers and *(b)* the financial services sector of the costs of complying with Financial Services Authority requirements. [147040]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 requires the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to carry out and publish for consultation cost-benefit analysis of new regulatory requirements. The Treasury does not conduct any additional assessment.

Public Sector Investment

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what definition he used for the term public sector investment in table B24 on page 237 of the pre-Budget report. [146347]

Mr. Boateng: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer the Prime Minister gave him on 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 58W.

School Funding

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Cabinet Office's strategy and delivery units on changes in the way money may be allocated to schools. [147147]

Mr. Boateng: The Chancellor has regular contact with the strategy and delivery units on a wide range of issues, including schools.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Adam Smith Institute

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what work his Department has commissioned from the Adam Smith Institute in the last five years; and how much each of these projects cost. [146938]

Hilary Benn: The information requested is in the following table. This does not include any lower value contracts, details of which are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All these contracts have been awarded in line with standard procurement practice.

Project title	*Country*	*Value (£)*
Legal Adviser within Coalition Provisional Authority South (CPAS)	Iraq	72,925
Economic Support to Coalition Provisional Authority South (CPAS)	Iraq	98,655
Secondment of Negotiations Support Staff to the Office of Prime Minister	West Bank and Gaza	75,800
ITD-DFID Staff Training[1]	Global (Non Project Specific)	288,435
Support to the Office of the Prime Minister and to the Cabinet Office	West Bank and Gaza	100,400
Economic Development within 1st Military Division HQ Basra	Iraq	57,910
Economic Support within 1st Military Division HQ Basra	Iraq	55,510
International Lawyer within 1st Military Division HQ Basra	Iraq	63,110
Andhra Pradesh Economic Restructuring Programme—Public Enterprise Reforms, Phase II	India	416,435
Asia Trade Consultancy	United Kingdom	44,200
Support Services for Public Enterprise Restructuring in South Africa	South Africa, Republic of	6,363,435
Support for capacity-building in the Ministry of Finance and Central Bank	Afghanistan	1,229,655
Trade Training for DFID Staff—Bangkok[1]	United Kingdom	32,328
Support to Water Sector Regulation by PURC-Ghana	Ghana	1,079,100
Trade Training for DFID Staff	United Kingdom	20,075
Consultants for Standards, Technical Regulatory Barriers Programme	Global (Non Project Specific)	43,990
Pilot Training and Capacity Building in International Waterhouse Law	Kyrgyz Republic	131,174
Trade Enabling Agreement	Global (Non Project Specific)	[1]—
Communications Film for Department of Disinvestment	India	89,500
PSRC: Water Privatisation and Regulation Study Tour	Tanzania	54,924
Support for Public Sector Undertaking Reforms and Social Safety Net in Madhya Pradesh	India	80,000
Conference on Disinvestment	India	70,000
Russia Trade Policy Project	Russia	1,199,041
Lead Adviser to Parastatal Sector Reform Commission (PSRC)	Tanzania	195,690
Seminar on Export Credits and Developing Countries	United Kingdom	101,035
Rehabilitation of Cyclone Damaged Lift Irrigation Points in Orissa	India	622,736
Initial Support to the Budgetary Processes of the Government of Macedonia	Macedonia	13,630
Medium Term Programme of Capacity Building for PURC	Ghana	636,900
UK-Ireland Privatisation and Regulation Study Tour	Tanzania	11,145

Project title	Country	Value (£)
Additional Support to the Privatisation Board	Bangladesh	106,241
Assistance to the Palestinian Negotiations Affairs Department	West Bank and Gaza	1,482,776
Technical Assistance for Public Enterprise Reform in Orissa	India	2,061,365
Privatisation Agency Support Project Consultancy	Zimbabwe	308,470
Privatisation Project Phase 3 and 4 Managing Consultant	Guyana	770,027
PR Unit Support for Parastatal Sector Reform Commission (PSRC)	Tanzania	272,975

[1] The two contracts indicated were issued under this enabling agreement.

Cotton

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had since 17 September 2003 with representatives of the United States Administration on the impact of US subsidies to domestic cotton producers on cotton producers in West Africa. [146587]

Hilary Benn: EU and US cotton subsidies are among the clearest examples of trade distortion by OECD countries. Failure to address them satisfactorily was a key issue behind the collapse of WTO talks at Cancun. Four West African countries (with support from European donors including the UK) presented an initiative at the WTO calling for the end to developed country subsidies, and compensatory support to developing country cotton producers who are negatively affected by them in the meantime. US subsidies are the largest, but recent research supported by my Department and the EU Directorate General for Development shows EU subsidies also affect West Africa because of market structures.

Reform of the EU's own support to its cotton sector is currently being discussed in Brussels. While these discussions continue, DFID has not had direct contacts with the US administration on the issue. The UK is pressing for more significant reform of the EU cotton regime than is currently proposed, both as an end in itself and also to help push the US to address their subsidies.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146916]

Hilary Benn: None.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible relocation of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement; [146931]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146887]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146901]

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement. [146871]

Hilary Benn: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which the Chief Secretary to the Treasury gave on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

General Affairs and External Relations Council

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the EU have taken place since his appointment; and how many he has attended. [147343]

Hilary Benn: Since my appointment as Secretary of State for International Development on 5 October 2003, there have been three meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) of the EU and one Informal Meeting of EU Development Ministers on 24 October.

Two GAERCs each year have a 'development' session. I attended the last such session in November 2003. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, represented the UK at the Italian Presidency's Informal Meeting in October, while I was in Madrid attending the Iraq Donor's Conference. For your information, I have listed the dates of all the GAERCs that have taken place since my appointment:

13–14 October 2003

17–18 November 2003

8–9 December 2003.

Leak Inquiries

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will list occasions on which his Department has conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if he will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [146941]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: Since 1997 DFID has investigated four suspected leaks. In line with exemptions 1(a) and 7(b) set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

Recruitment Advertising

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much has been spent on recruitment advertisements in the press, broken down by publication, by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* quangos under the Department and *(c)* non-departmental Government bodies under the Department (i) in the last year and (ii) since 1997. [145804]

Hilary Benn: The Department for International Development expenditure on recruitment advertising in the calendar years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 is shown in table A as follows:

DFID advertises in specialist and professional publications according to the specific nature and requirements of each vacancy. This includes placement of adverts in overseas and developing country publications. DFID uses a wide range of publications and to list all the details would incur disproportionate cost. As a result, table B as follows indicates the main publications where we have incurred the largest expenditure.

Figures for 1997, 1998, and 1999 are not available.

Table A—Total DFID advertising expenditure per calendar year—from calendar year 2000 onwards

Year	*(£)*
2000	751,972.46
2001	1,208,190.72
2002	914,571.19
2003	871,246.31
Total	3,745,980.68

Table B—Publications where main DFID advertising expenditure has been incurred—per calendar year—from calendar year 2000 onwards

Publication	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*Total*
British Medical Journal	13,104	11,291	1,805	4,566	30,766
Computer Weekly	Nil	14,779	4,239	22,372	41,390
Daily Mail	Nil	14,430	Nil	8,540	22,970
Economist/Economist website	324,850	572,793	471,561	381,141	1,750,345
Ethnic Media Group titles	3,308	7,365	10,998	49,326	70,997
Evening Standard	Nil	18,109	Nil	11,762	29,871
Far East Economic Review	Nil	19,661	9,038	Nil	28,699
Financial Times	18,954	35,326	Nil	1,974	56,254
Guardian and website and Weekly	196,426	234,577	149,499	171,274	751,776
Herald and Sunday Herald	8,818	25,983	9,729	32,453	76,983
New Civil Engineer	13,187	12,810	30,634	4,344	60,975
New Scientist	9,954	45,753	29,504	27,448	112,659
Planning	3,175	7,892	14,368	Nil	25,435
Police Review	18,054	Nil	3,102	14,448	35,604
The Teacher	Nil	Nil	11,289	5,357	16,646
Telegraph (Daily and Sunday)	21,501	47,498	11,074	24,127	104,200
Times and Sunday Times	31,941	Nil	44,179	17,978	94,098
Times Educ Supp and Higher Educ Supp	16,902	14,130	26,541	12,304	69,877
Total by year	680,174	1,082,397	827,560	789,414	3,379,545

South Africa

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions the British Government have had with the South African Government regarding proposals for land reform in South Africa; and what advice his Government have given President Mbeki and his Government on this matter. [146841]

Hilary Benn: The Department for International Development and the High Commission in Pretoria are in regular touch with South Africa's Department for Land Affairs. Land reform is a vital element in the transformation of South Africa after the apartheid era, and potentially offers important economic opportunities for poor people. We welcome the Government of South Africa's commitment to a transparent, accountable and legal process of land reform—through restitution to previous owners of land acquired under pre-1994 legislation, through supporting purchase of agricultural land by previously disadvantaged groups, and through reform of communal land tenure arrangements in the former homelands. To support the Government of South Africa in increasing the pace of land reform, DFID committed £2 million in 2002 to provide technical support to the Department of Land Affairs, and to support a public consultation process on the Communal Land Rights Bill.

Sustainable Development

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how his Department's bid to the forthcoming government spending round will contribute to the United Kingdom's objectives on sustainable development. [146838]

Hilary Benn: Poverty reduction and sustainable development are closely inter-linked since development will only be sustainable if it tackles problems of global poverty alongside pressures on the environment. DFID policies and programmes therefore support sustainable economic and social development at both global and country levels. Resources provided as a result of the forthcoming Spending Review will enable us to continue these efforts. We will be developing plans for the next Spending Review period over the coming months.

Trade Barriers

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the effect of reductions in barriers to non-agricultural goods on *(a)* developed countries and *(b)* developing countries. [146614]

Hilary Benn: The WTO negotiations on non-agricultural market access have yet to reach agreement with several countries having submitted proposals. Although this makes assessment of the implications for developed and developing countries difficult, most studies concur that reductions in tariffs could bring significant benefits. A recent UNCTAD[1] study estimated that a reduction in barriers to non-agricultural goods will lead to an increase in global welfare of between $20 billion and $40 billion. A substantial majority of these gains are expected to go to developing countries, with welfare in developed countries remaining virtually unchanged.

[1] Laird, S., Cordoba, F., Vanzetti, D. (2003) Market Access Proposals for Non-Agricultural Products. UNCTAD.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Legislation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Leader of the House if he will list for each session since 2000–01 the *(a)* Acts of Parliament and parts thereof and *(b)* Statutory Instruments enacted by requirements of legislation of the European Community and Union; and how many regulations passed by EU institutions have applied without further enactment in each year since 2000. [145460]

Mr. Hain: This information is not collated and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of progress in destroying poppy production in Afghanistan by use of strimmers; and if he will make a statement. [147165]

Mr. Rammell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mike O'Brien, gave him on 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 1426–27.

Responsibility for eradication programmes in Afghanistan resides with the Afghan government. We are not aware of the use of strimmers as an eradication method in Afghanistan. Methods which have proved effective in the past include the use of sticks, ploughs and tractors.

Chechnya

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role he envisages for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Chechnya. [146685]

Mr. MacShane: We believe that the OSCE could have a useful role to play in support of a political process in Chechnya. We regret that since the closure of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya at the end of 2002, it has been impossible for the OSCE Chairmanship in Office to agree with the Russian Federation on specific OSCE projects for Chechnya, with or without an OSCE presence on the ground in the region. If President Kadyrov showed clearly that he was prepared to work for reconciliation, to promote a genuinely open political process and to uphold human rights, the OSCE would be ready to assist, though any activities would have to take full account of the security situation in the region.

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he *(a)* has made and *(b)* intends to make to the Russian authorities to persuade them (i) to cease compelling displaced Chechens to return to the war zone, (ii) to allow humanitarian organisations access to camps containing displaced Chechens, (iii) to avoid closing such camps without providing alternative accommodation and (iv) to issue invitations to UN specialist agencies to visit Chechnya. [146687]

Mr. Rammell: We have bilaterally and with the EU repeatedly reminded the Russian Government of their obligations under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, stressing that all movements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) must be strictly voluntary. We have also stated that the dismantling of shelters, or the suspension of food, water and energy supplies, in our view constitutes a forced return.

The EU most recently raised concerns over IDPs during the recent Chechen Presidential elections. The EU, with UK support, issued a statement raising concerns over the conduct of the elections. The statement asked the Russian Government to provide assurances that the return of IDPs in Ingushetia and throughout the North Caucasus would be strictly voluntary. After the elections had taken place the EU issued a further statement, which the UK also supported. That statement expressed concern over the condition of refugees in neighbouring Ingushetia, repeating the EU's rejection of any attempts of involuntary return of refugees to Chechnya. It also called on the Russian authorities to renew their efforts to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Russian authorities in respect of *(a)* the mass bombardment of civilians in Chechnya, *(b)* the desirability of negotiations to bring the conflict to an end and *(c)* the applicability of internationally accepted standards of conduct to this conflict. [146709]

Mr. Rammell: We regularly raise with the Russian Government UK concerns about the situation in Chechnya, in particular human rights. We have stressed that there is a need for an open political process, and that Russian security operations in Chechnya must uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. We most recently did so following the Chechen Presidential elections, when I issued a press statement on 16 October 2003 calling for newly elected President Kadyrov to

work for reconciliation, to promote a genuinely open political process and to uphold human rights. A copy of the press statement is available on the Foreign and Commonwealth website: www.fco.gov.uk/policy/news/press-releases. The UK also supported EU statements issued on 26 September and 9 October 2003. copies of which are available on the Council of the Europe Union website address: http://register.consilium.eu.int.

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the arraignment before an international criminal court of individuals suspected of war crimes in Chechnya. [146710]

Mr. Rammell: The Russian Federation is not a State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Chechnya is currently therefore outside its jurisdiction. The UK has not called for an international tribunal on Chechnya as we believe such a move would be counter-productive. We continue to press Russia on the situation in Chechnya both bilaterally and multilaterally through the EU. UN and Council of Europe.

Colombia

Mr. Luke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government is taking to ensure that Colombia fulfils its commitment to implement UN recommendations on human rights. [146747]

Mr. Rammell: A Working Group of representatives of governments which attended the London Meeting on International Support for Colombia has been set up in Bogota to monitor progress of commitments made on all sides, including UN recommendations. The Working Group is evaluating how we can work with the Colombian Government to ensure quicker progress on the implementation of the UN's recommendations. We will continue to impress upon the Colombian Government the importance we attach to the protection of human rights and of taking full account of the UN's own assessment of progress on its recommendations.

Egypt

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government has made to the Egyptian Government since 26 December 2003 regarding Mr. Magiid Nawaz. [147228]

Mr. Rammell: Maajid Nawaz is one of three British men currently detained in Egypt.

Ministers and officials have made several representations to the Egyptian authorities about this case since the men were first detained in April 2002. The verdict was expected on 25 December 2003, but the case has been adjourned until 25 March. My noble Friend the Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean wrote to the Egyptian Foreign Minister on 7 January to express her concern at the length of time it is taking to complete this case.

EU Enlargement

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the *(a)* levels of unemployment and *(b)* living standards in the nations which will secure membership of the EU in May. [146654]

Mr. MacShane: In 2003, average unemployment in the 10 accession countries was 10.2 per cent., caused largely by the restructuring required for EU accession. It is expected that this figure will fall as the adjustments become embedded. Unemployment in the EU15 in 2003 remained unchanged at 8.0 per cent. The average GDP per capita in the 10 accession countries in 2002 (latest figures) was US$7,105, compared to US$24,689 in the EU15. While this demonstrates the current disparity between existing and new member states, the real GDP growth in accession countries over the last five years has been 18.9 per cent. (4.1 per cent. in 2003), compared with 10.1 per cent. in the EU15 (0.8 per cent. in 2003).

Combined with the political and economic reforms enacted for EU membership, this sustained growth should facilitate a gradual reduction in the current disparity, as has been the case in previous waves of enlargement. (All figures are from the IMF).

EU Expulsions

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what mechanism the European Union has to expel a member state. [146711]

Mr. MacShane: There is no mechanism in the EU's Treaties for the expulsion of a member state. There is however provision in Article 7 TEU for the suspension of a member state's voting rights, though its obligations under the Treaty would still continue to be binding.

European Constitution

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions would be placed on the entitlement of EU member states to pursue national policies on *(a)* asylum, *(b)* visas and *(c)* conditions of entry and residence in the event of the proposed European Constitution being approved by member states. [146655]

Mr. MacShane: There is a strong case for co-operation between member states in asylum and immigration. In the event of member states approving the Constitutional Treaty, we will keep our existing opt-ins. We will not participate in common measures where it is not in the UK's interest to do so.

Georgia

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he proposes to hold discussions with the new government in Georgia. [146482]

Mr. Rammell: The Government look forward to working with the new leadership in Georgia. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote to Mr. Saakashvili on 5 January to congratulate him on his victory in the presidential elections and to offer the UK's support in helping him tackle the major challenges ahead.

The UK Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Sir Brian Fall, will visit Georgia from 12–14 January for talks with the new Administration.

Iraq

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government's plans for British involvement in Iraq have changed following the capture of Saddam Hussein. [146221]

Mr. Rammell: Government policy on Iraq has not changed following the capture of Saddam Hussein. His capture should reassure Iraqis who have suffered under his rule and feared his return to power. We will continue with our aim of working with Iraqis towards the establishment of a democratically elected government for Iraq.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Government's policy is on where Saddam Hussein should be tried. [146222]

Mr. Rammell: We have made it clear that it is for the Iraqi people to decide how to bring to justice those responsible for crimes committed by the former regime. On 10 December 2003 the Governing Council announced the creation of an Iraqi Special Tribunal to fulfil such a task. However, it would be premature at this stage to speculate whether Saddam Hussein will face prosecution before the Tribunal.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment the Government has made of weapons imported into Iraq in 2003 *(a)* prior to and *(b)* subsequent to the invasion by Coalition Forces; for what purpose this was done and to whom they were supplied; whether such supply was in breach of the UN arms embargo; and if he will make a statement. [146432]

Mr. Rammell: The Government scrutinises all export licence applications and closely monitors the sale of weapons overseas from the UK. All UK exports are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria on a case by case basis. In line with our obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 661 (6 August 1990) and its amendments, the UK did not sell or supply any weapons to Iraq prior to the onset of the conflict in 2003. Since the conflict ended the UK has rigorously enforced UNSCR 1483 (22 May 2003) which maintains the prohibition on the sale of all arms and related material, other than those required by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to serve the purposes of UNSCR 1483 and other related resolutions.

Since the introduction of UNSCR 1483 the Government have approved export licences for the sale and supply of weapons to the CPA and for the protection of CPA personnel and personnel contracted to assist with the reconstruction of Iraq. I made clear in a Written Statement to the House on 14 October 2003, *Official Report*, column 7WS, that we have licensed sub-machine guns and pistols for this purpose. The Government have also licensed smoke grenades and ammunition for the protection of CPA personnel, as well as ammunition for the CPA's work with the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior. A statement on both of these will be issued in January.

We are unable to comment on the export control policy of other countries, although EU countries apply substantially the same criteria under the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and are similarly bound by the UN arms embargo.

Given the ongoing problems of security in Iraq, the Government are unable to assess the illegal flow of weapons across Iraq's borders since the end of the conflict in the spring of 2003. Such exports are in breach of the UN arms embargo, which was reaffirmed in UNSCR 1483.

Israel

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for the UK's responsibilities as *(a)* a permanent member of the UN Security Council and *(b)* a high contracting party to the Fourth Geneva Convention of the International Court of Justice's decision to open hearings into the legal consequences of the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian Territory. [146562]

Mr. Rammell: The International Court of Justice has been requested by the UN General Assembly (Resolution A/RES/ES-10/14) to give an Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences arising from the construction of the wall being built by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The International Court of Justice's decision to hold hearings on this issue has no direct implications for the UK's responsibilities as a High Contracting Party to the Fourth Geneva Convention or as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of *(a)* the amount of Palestinian land planned for appropriation by Israel under the map released by the Israeli Government on 23 October 2003 to construct the Separation Wall and *(b)* the amount of land that will be made inaccessible to its owners by the wall. [146564]

Mr. Rammell: According to the UN Secretary General's report of 24 November 2003, the Israeli Defence Force's map of 23 October predicts that 975 square km of land will lie between the Green Line and the fence, and 73 square km will take the form of closed areas.

While recognising Israel's legitimate security concerns, the UK considers the route of the fence Israel is building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to be unlawful. It threatens the prospects for a two-state solution and is an obstacle to peace. The Government continues to make representations to the Government of Israel to re-route the fence away from Palestinian land.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of *(a)* the amount of Palestinian land (i) appropriated and (ii) planned for appropriation by Israel in the area around Jerusalem to construct the

Separation Wall and *(b)* the amount of land in that area already made inaccessible to its owners by the Wall. [146565]

Mr. Rammell: The UN Secretary General's report of 24 November 2003 sets out various statistics relating to Israel's building of a fence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The report contained no specific figures for the land appropriated in the Jerusalem area, on which estimates from other sources vary.

While recognising Israel's legitimate security concerns, the UK considers the route of the fence Israel is building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to be unlawful. It threatens the prospects for a two-state solution and is an obstacle to peace. The Government continues to urge the Government of Israel to re-route the fence away from Palestinian land.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he intends to respond to the invitations from the International Court of Justice to member states to submit written evidence by 30 January to the hearings it is organising into the legal consequences of the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian Territory; and whether he will indicate by 13 February whether the UK intends to take part in those hearings. [146563]

Mr. Rammell: We are giving careful consideration to the UK's response to the International Court of Justice's invitation to member states to submit a written statement to the Court and/or to take part in the oral proceedings. I shall write to my hon. Friend to inform him of our decision in due course.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom recognises the right of Israel to possess and deploy nuclear weapons. [147028]

Mr. Rammell: As a non-signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Israel would not be in breach of any obligation under international law in the possession or deployment of nuclear weapons. However, the UK firmly believes that possession or deployment would be extremely destabilising for the region. We have consistently urged Israel to clarify its nuclear status by acceding to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons state, and signing a full-scope safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Under the agreement with IAEA, Israel's nuclear facilities would be subject to regular inspection to detect and eliminate any diversion of nuclear materials for weapons production. The UK has consistently supported UN Resolutions calling for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. That zone would include Israel.

Leak Inquiries

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list occasions on which his Department has conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if he will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [146943]

Mr. Rammell: Since 1997 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has investigated 20 suspected leaks. In line with exemptions 1(a) and 7(b) of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the practice of successive governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

Ministerial Visits (Africa)

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which African countries *(a)* he and *(b)* other Ministers in his Department have visited since June 2001; and what the (i) dates and (ii) main purposes of the visits were. [146937]

Mr. Mullin: The following table shows visits to African countries made by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Foreign and Commonwealth Office ministers since 1 June 2001.

Country	*From*	*To*	*Purpose of visit*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs			
Nigeria	5 September 2001	6 September 2001	Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting
Egypt	27 September 2001	27 September 2001	Part of Middle-East tour
Democratic Republic of Congo/Rwanda/ Burundi/Uganda	21 January 2002	23 January 2002	Bilaterals
Egypt	8 October 2002	8 October 2002	Part of Middle-East tour
South Africa	12 May 2003	13 May 2003	Bilateral Forum
Nigeria	2 December 2003	4 December 2003	Accompanying HM Queen on State Visit
The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Baroness Amos			
Nigeria	25 July 2001	27 July 2001	Bilateral
South Africa	29 August 2001	3 September 2001	UN World Against Racism Conference
Nigeria	5 September 2001	7 September 2001	Commonwealth Foreign Minister's Meeting (Accompanied Foreign Secretary)
Zimbabwe	24 October 2001	26 October 2001	Bilateral
Ethiopia	5 December 2001	8 December 2001	G8 Meeting
Kenya/Tanzania	2 January 2002	10 January 2002	Bilateral
Senegal/Nigeria	6 February 2002	10 February 2002	Accompanying Prime Minister (Visit also included France)
South Africa	12 February 2002	16 February 2002	G8 Meeting
Senegal	10 April 2002	13 April 2002	Bilateral and G8 Meeting
Ghana	25 April 2002	26 April 2002	Bilateral
Mozambique	14 May 2002	17 May 2002	Bilateral
Lesotho/South Africa	29 July 2002	3 August 2002	Bilaterals
Nigeria	3 September 2002	5 September 2002	Bilateral

Country	From	To	Purpose of visit
Mozambique	7 November 2002	8 November 2002	EU/SADC Meeting
Burkina Faso	27November 2002	29 November 2002	EU/Africa Dialogue
Angola/Ghana	4 December 2002	9 December 2002	Bilateral (Angola) and G8 Meeting (Ghana)
Senega]	18 December 2002	19 December 2002	Bilateral
Tanzania/Rwanda/Kenya	27 January 2003	31 January 2003	Bilateral
Cameroon/Angola/Guinea	25 February 2003	28 February 2003	Bilaterals
Cameroon/Angola/Guinea/Ghana	11 March 2003	12 March 2003	Bilaterals
South Africa	29 March 2003	1 April 2003	Bilateral
Botswana	1 April 2003	3 April 2003	Bilateral
South Africa	4 April 2003	6 April 2003	Bilateral
Mali	14 April 2003	15 April 2003	G8 APR Meeting
Minister of State right hon. Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean			
Egypt	17 January 2003	23 January 2003	Bilateral (Visit also included Saudi Arabia)
Morocco/Tunisia	14 September 2003	18 September 2003	
The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Mr. Ben Bradshaw			
Egypt	18 July 2001	25 July 2001	Bilateral (Visit also included Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon)
Algeria/Morocco	23 September 2001	26 September 2001	Bilateral
Minister of State Mike O'Brien			
Libya	6 August 2002	8 August 2002	Bilateral
Egypt	11 December 2002	13 December 2002	Bilateral. (Visit also included Qatar)
Algeria	19 May 2003	21 May 2003	Bilateral/Familiarisation
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Mr. Chris Mullin			
Ghana/Cote D'Ivoire/Sierra Leone	22 July 2003	25 July 2003	Bilaterals/Familiarisation
Kenya/South Africa	29 October 2003	5 November 2003	Bilaterals/Familiarisation
Nigeria	3 December 2003	8 December 2003	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
Eritrea/Djibouti/Ethiopia	12 January 2004	20 January 2004	Bilaterals/Familiarisation

North Korea

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an appraisal of the threat posed by North Korea, with particular reference to its policy towards acquisition of nuclear weapons. [146483]

Mr. Rammell: The Government believe that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been pursuing two separate programmes for the production of fissile material, through the enrichment of uranium and the processing of plutonium. DPRK also has long-range missiles in service, and we believe it has the capacity to develop missiles capable of reaching the UK. We will continue to urge the Government of DPRK, bilaterally and in co-operation with international partners, to remove the threat thus posed to the international community by dismantling its nuclear programmes verifiably and irreversibly, and by continuing the moratorium on the flight-testing of long range missiles.

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding the elimination of its nuclear weapons programme. [147144]

Mr. Rammell: The Government makes regular representations to the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), through our Embassy in Pyongyang and through the DPRK Embassy in London, about its nuclear programmes. I also raised the issue with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su Hon during his visit to London in April last year. We continue to express our concerns and to encourage DPRK to comply with its international obligations.

Official Visits (Africa)

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which African *(a)* heads of state, *(b)* prime ministers and *(c)* foreign ministers have made official visits to the United Kingdom since June 2001; what the (i) dates and (ii) main purposes of the visits were; and which United Kingdom ministers met them. [146939]

Mr. Mullin: There have been a number of visits by leaders and ministers of African countries to the UK. Visits may be planned by the visitor's own government or by the Conference and Visits Group (CVG) of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The following table shows all official visits organised by CVG since June 2001. Details of those visits organised by the visitor's own government are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Visitor	From	To	Purpose of visit	UK Ministers met
Angola				
Foreign Minister Miranda	24 March 2002	27 March 2002	Sponsored visit	Foreign Secretary Baroness Amos
Botswana				
President Mogae	17 September 2001	19 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers	Prime Minister, SoS International Development Baroness Amos

Visitor	From	To	Purpose of visit	UK Ministers met
Foreign Minister Merafhe	17 September 2001	19 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers (accompanying President)	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
President Mogae	8 June 2003	11 June 2003	Guest of Government Visit	Prime Minister SoS International Development Foreign Secretary
Foreign Minister Merafhe	8 June 2003	11 June 2003	Guest of Government Visit (accompanying President)	Prime Minister SoS International Development Foreign Secretary
Central African Republic				
Prime Minister Ziguele	1 September 2003	7 September 2003	Sponsored Visit	Mr. Mullin
Ethiopia				
Prime Minister Zenawi	22 February 2003	26 February 2003	Guest of Government Visit	Baroness Amos SoS International Development Prime Minister Chancellor of the Exchequer Foreign Secretary
Foreign Minister Mesfin	22 February 2003	26 February 2003	Guest of Government Visit (accompanying Prime Minister)	Baroness Amos SoS International Development Prime Minister Chancellor of the Exchequer Foreign Secretary
Prime Minister Zenawi	13 July 2003	14 July 2003	Progressive Governance Summit	Prime Minister
Ghana				
President Kufuor	15 September 2001	21 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
Foreign Minister Gbeho	15 September 2001	21 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers (accompanying President)	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
Foreign Minister Owusu-Agyemang	28 November 2002	30 November 2002	Sponsored Visit	Foreign Secretary Mr. Rammell
Mozambique				
President Chissano	18 September 2001	19 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
Nigeria				
President Obasanjo	17 September 2001	18 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
Rwanda				
Foreign Minister Murigande	11 May 2003	14 May 2003	Sponsored Visit	SoS International Development
SENEGAL				
President Wade	17 September 2001	18 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
Foreign Minister Gadio	5 November 2001	7 November 2001	Sponsored Visit	Foreign Secretary Baroness Amos
South Africa				
President Mbeki	11 June 2001	15 June 2001	State Visit	Prime Minister
Foreign Minister Dlamini-Zuma	11 June 2001	15 June 2001	State Visit (Accompanying President)	Prime Minister
President Mbeki	13 July 2003	14 July 2003	Progressive Governance Summit	Prime Minster
Tanzania				
President Mkapa	16 September 2001	20 September 2001	Africa meeting at Chequers	Prime Minister SoS International Development Baroness Amos
Zambia				
Foreign Minister Mwansa	15 November 2003	20 November 2003	Sponsored Visit	Mr. Mullin

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Disclosure and Public Interest Immunity

Vera Baird: To ask the Solicitor-General what advice the Attorney-General plans to issue to deal with the issues raised in the European Court of Human Rights case of Edwards and Lewis. [146760]

The Solicitor-General: This matter is the subject of appeal. The Grand Chamber in Strasbourg has agreed to hear an appeal by the UK Government against the decision in the case of Edwards and Lewis.

The House of Lords will be considering this judgment in the case of R *v.* H and C on 14–15 January 2004. The Attorney-General will be appearing on behalf of the Crown in that case.

The Attorney-General has no plans to issue any guidance until the issues raised in the appeal of R *v.* H and C have been considered by the House of Lords.

Vera Baird: To ask the Solicitor-General (1) if the Attorney-General will advise that special counsel should be available where there are issues of disclosure and public interest immunity involved in applications to try someone without a jury because of fear of intimidation under section 43 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003; [146779]

(2) if the Attorney-General will advise that special counsel ought to be instructed in cases where there are issues of public interest immunity and disclosure in criminal trials. [146780]

The Solicitor-General: This issue falls to be considered by the House of Lords in the case of R *v.* H and C. This appeal is to be heard on 14–15 January 2004. The Attorney-General will be representing the Crown in that case.

The House of Lords are being asked to consider the Public Interest Immunity system in England and Wales and whether or not it is necessary to instruct special advocates.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces Supplies

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce a system to enable equipment and stocks to be tracked throughout the armed forces supply train. [141811]

Mr. Ingram: Since April 2002, the Defence Logistics Organisation, has taken a number of steps to improve both the ability to track assignments and to measure the performance of our resupply systems.

In December 2002, the purchase of elements of the "Total Asset Visibility" system currently in service in the United States Department of Defense was approved, in order to enable interoperability with US forces. The system is known as "Total Asset Visibility (Minus)" (TAV (Minus)), and is a radio frequency identity system that enables remote and automated scanning of electronically tagged containers, pallets, and other consignments. It is linked to existing United Kingdom information systems.

The contract for TAV (Minus) was let on 23 January 2003, and installation work began four days later. The first phase of this work was divided into two parts. The first elements of Phase 1 to support early sustainment activity were completed by 15 February. The remaining elements of Phase 1, to give more comprehensive detail of strategic Supply Chain activity into Theatre, were completed by 31 March. Phase 2 of the system, to support redeployment and recovery, was installed from the end of decisive operations on 1 May, and was completed by the end of July. TAV (Minus) technology has since been integrated with information systems used by the Royal Navy. TAV (Minus) has genuinely enhanced our consignment tracking capability and offers an opportunity for further exploitation.

Armoured Vehicles

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost will be of bringing the Armoured Vehicle Fleet to the standard required to meet operational targets; and if he will make a statement. [144505]

Mr. Ingram: I am withholding the information requested under Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Challenger 2 Tanks

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost was of *(a)* improved oil filters and fans, *(b)* oil health monitoring equipment and *(c)* extended side skirts used in the dust mitigation package for the Challenger II tanks deployed on operation Telic. [145645]

Mr. Ingram: The costs of the improved oil filters and fans, oil health monitoring equipment and extended side skirts used in the dust mitigation package for Challenger IIs deployed on Operation Telic are listed in the table.

Dust mitigation package	*£ million*
Improved air filters and fans	5.2
Oil health monitoring equipment	0.039
Extended side skirts and mud flaps	2.5

Departmental Secondments

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors underlay the policy of his Department on central monitoring of *(a)* outward secondments to private companies and *(b)* secondments to other governments; and if he will make a statement. [146826]

Mr. Caplin: Outward secondments to industry are subject to a formal application and selection process within MOD. Where an applicant is successful, a formal secondment agreement setting out the terms and conditions of the secondment is drawn up between MOD and the organisation concerned, covering aspects such as the duties to be undertaken, conduct, discipline, performance and development issues. Monitoring of performance and progress during the secondment is then undertaken by the relevant MOD interchange unit on a case by case basis as best fits the particular circumstances.

Appointments to other governments and departments are treated as public sector employment and are therefore subject to normal career posting arrangements. They are arranged by the appropriate local HR managers, and are not included as part of the central interchange programme. Although such appointments are not centrally monitored or covered by a formal secondment contract the other arrangements are broadly similar.

All MOD interchange activity is conducted in accordance with Cabinet Office guidelines which can be found at www.interchange.gov.uk.

Galileo Satellite

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations have been received regarding the Galileo satellite network; what the Government's response has been; and if he will make a statement. [146363]

Mr. Jamieson: I have been asked to reply.

The Galileo Global Navigation Satellite System is a civil programme that falls under the European Union's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport. Negotiations on the project are continuing with European Union partners, the European Commission and the United States, including its interoperability with the US Global Positioning System. During these negotiations the Government have been in regular contact with organisations and individuals representing the companies involved in the development of satellite navigation systems and applications. The UK is committed to the commercial success of Galileo as a civil system that has the potential to offer many opportunities for new transport and other applications.

Iraq

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how soon the relatives of Iraqi civilians killed following

incidents involving the use of force by British military personnel since the end of the conflict were officially notified of the fatality. [141683]

Mr. Ingram: UK forces inform the International Committee of the Red Cross of all confirmed civilian fatalities of which they are aware have been caused, or allegedly caused, by UK forces. The ICRC then endeavours to inform the relatives as soon as practicable.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rights of redress have been made available to the families of Iraqi civilians allegedly killed by British forces since the end of the conflict. [141684]

Mr. Ingram: Redress for Iraqi civilians who have allegedly been killed or injured by United Kingdom forces is covered by Section 6 of the Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 17. This requires cases to be dealt with by the parent state of the person whose activities are alleged to have caused the loss, in accordance with the national laws of that parent state.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which units deployed on Operation Telic 1 are to return to Iraq under the current planned roulement. [144154]

Mr. Ingram: The following Army unit was deployed on Operation Telic 1, and has subsequently returned under the most recent Operation Telic roulement: 26 Regiment Royal Artillery.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what methods are being used to decontaminate Iraqi tanks and other military equipment disabled or destroyed by the use of depleted uranium munitions in the southern sector of Iraq under British military control. [147024]

Mr. Ingram: To date, all military vehicles known to have been hit by DU munitions within the southern sector of Iraq under British military control have been clearly marked and are pending further examination when the security situation allows. UK efforts so far have focused on the identification and demarcation of contaminated vehicles.

Iraq Survey Group

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British personnel are engaged in the Iraq Survey Group; and when he expects its next report to be published. [146579]

Mr. Ingram: On 7 January 2004, there were 55 United Kingdom civilian and military personnel attached to the Iraq Survey Group. There is no formal requirement on the ISG to report according to a particular timetable.

Operation Rockingham

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the role and function is of the unit set up under Operation Rockingham; what its cost was in the last financial year; and if he will make a statement. [146708]

Mr. Ingram: Operation Rockingham was established in 1991 to provide support to UNSCOM inspections in Iraq. It has subsequently also supported UNMOVIC inspections and currently supports the work of the Iraq Survey Group. In the last financial year (2002–03), the cost of the team was £78,723.53.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary Oilers

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the periods in dry-dock of each Royal Fleet Auxiliary oiler in each year since 1997. [146505]

Mr. Ingram: The maintenance periods undertaken by Royal Fleet Auxiliary oilers in each year since 1997 that have included a period in dry dock are shown in the following table.

Type of maintenance	*Ship*	*Start date*	*End date*
Routine docking	Oakleaf	2 June 1997	22 August 1997
Refit	Bayleaf	4 May 1998	17 July 1998
Refit	Olna	4 May 1998	28 August 1998
Refit	Grey Rover	15 June 1998	27 November 1998
Refit	Orangeleaf	18 January 1999	26 March 1999
Refit	Black Rover	15 February 1999	20 May 1999
Refit	Brambleleaf	19 July 1999	24 September 1999
Routine docking	Olwen	12 April 1999	14 June 1999
Routine docking	Gold Rover	20 March 2000	26 May 2000
Refit	Oakleaf	14 February 2000	21 April 2000
Routine docking	Grey Rover	18 June 2001	20 August 2001
Routine docking	Orangeleaf	27 August 2001	26 October 2001
Routine docking	Black Rover	1 April 2002	24 May 2002
Routine docking	Brambleleaf	29 April 2002	28 June 2002
Contractor support period	Oakleaf	26 August 2002	22 September 2002
Refit	Gold Rover	14 October 2002	20 December 2002
Routine docking	Oakleaf	7 April 2003	30 May 2003
Refit	Bayleaf	3 June 2003	8 August 2003

The time in dry dock is only ever a part of the overall maintenance period and details of the exact time each vessel spent in the dock are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In addition to the routine maintenance shown in the table RFA Grey Rover was docked in 1997 to undertake an emergency repair.

The two new tankers RFA Wave Knight and Wave Ruler have not been subject to docking periods since entering service.

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* year of construction and *(b)* anticipated year of decommissioning of each oiler in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [146506]

Mr. Ingram: The information requested is set out in the table:

RFA vessel	*Year of construction*	*Present planned decommissioning year*
Grey Rover	1970	2007
Gold Rover	1974	2009
Black Rover	1974	2010
Brambleleaf	1976	2009
Bay leaf	1982	2010
Orangeleaf	1975	2009
Oakleaf	1981	2015
Fort Rosalie	1978	2013
Fort Austin	1979	2014
Fort Victoria	1993	2019
Fort George	1993	2019
Wave Knight	2000	2028
Wave Ruler	2001	2028

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to use ships taken up from trade as oilers in future expeditionary warfare. [146508]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence does not routinely plan to requisition oil tankers from trade. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where we would wish to do so.

Second World War Ordnance (Badnells Pit Landfill Site)

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what records exist detailing the disposal of ordnance from the Second World War ammunition dump near Slough into the Badnells Pit landfill site near Maidenhead. [147021]

Mr. Caplin: MOD research has identified no official records that support claims of the dumping of ammunition in the Badnells Pit landfill site.

The authorised methods of disposal for Service munitions from Service stocks, both during and after the Second World War, did not include dumping in landfill sites. The standard methods of disposal involved the use of sea dumping, burning or the demolition of the material by explosive means.

Warships

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the due decommissioning dates are for each of the *(a)* Swiftsure class submarines and *(b)* batch 3 Type 22 frigates; and which of these dates have been brought forward during the past year. [146510]

Mr. Ingram: The current planned decommissioning dates for the Swiftsure class submarines and Type 22 Batch 3 frigates are as follows.

HMS	*Year*
Swiftsure class submarines:	
Spartan	2006
Sovereign	2006
Superb	2008
Sceptre	2010
Type 22 Batch 3 frigates:	
Cornwall	2015
Cumberland	2017
Campbeltown	2017
Chatham	2018

The planned decommissioning date for HMS Chatham was brought forward from 2020. This is the only amendment to have been made within the last 12 months.

Split North Port, Croatia

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence further to his letter of 30 November 2003 on Split North Port, Croatia, how much the rent payable for the Split North Port was during the relevant period; and how much the underpayment was. [145219]

Mr. Ingram: The lease between the Ministry of Defence and Split North Port (SNP) provided for payments of around $8.9 million. Within the $6.35 million settlement in 2001, was an overall figure of $5.5 million for several claims by SNP taken together, including underpayment of rent, use of facilities and back interest. The claim for underpayment of rent arose from an Arrangement between NATO and the Croatian Government not the original lease.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Civil Service (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [145998]

Mr. Pearson: 3.5 per cent. of the senior civil servants employed in the Northern Ireland Office have declared a disability. The corresponding figure for the Northern Ireland Civil Service is 3 per cent..

The NIO is awaiting the detailed results of the Northern Ireland 2001 Census before setting a Departmental target for people with disabilities in the Senior Civil Service.

There are a number of measures in place to improve the representation of disabled people at all levels in the NIO, including in senior posts:

Since 1998 the NIO has run a bursary scheme for staff below SCS level with disabilities, where the recipient is provided with a fast-track development programme of training, mentor ing and work placements to enable them to compete at the senior grades;

The Department has participated in the Cabinet Office 2003 Summer Placement Scheme for disabled graduates/undergraduates. The eight week placement, at fast stream level, provides the participant with high quality work experience to attract them to the opportunities of a future fast stream career in the Civil Service;

Reasonable adjustment measures are provided to assist existing staff with disabilities to remain in work; and

Work is carried out with schools and organisations for disabled people in Northern Ireland to increase their awareness of the job opportunities available within the Civil Service.

Dental Care

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the examination of the future delivery of primary care dental services in Northern Ireland to commence; what form he expects the examination will take; and when he expects to be able to report the findings. [147382]

Angela Smith: The Chief Dental Officer is currently developing a new Oral Health Strategy, which will set the oral health agenda for the next 10 years. It will identify the oral health needs of the Northern Ireland population, determine desired outcomes and identify areas where oral health can link into the wider health agenda.

It is hoped that work on the new Oral Health Strategy will be concluded by June 2004 and this will then allow the development of a strategy for the delivery of primary care dental services to commence. That strategy will also take account of recent reviews of the dental workforce and the community dental service and consider whether any of the new contractual arrangements, currently being developed in England, should be introduced here.

The aim is to have the necessary legislation in place to introduce any changes from April 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Both strategies will be developed in consultation with service users, health and social services professionals, key stakeholders and relevant interest groups.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising for his Department was for 2002–03. [145725]

Mr. Paul Murphy: The total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising across the 11 Departments of the Northern Ireland administration during 2002–03 was £2,064,598.35 and the corresponding figure for Northern Ireland Office was £114,082.26.

Fishing Industry

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates in the last five years the Minister with responsibility for Agriculture and Rural Affairs visited *(a)* Kilkeel, *(b)* Ardglass and *(c)* Portavogie to meet the fishing industry and its representatives. [144617]

Mr. Pearson: I visited Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie Harbours on Sunday 2 February 2003. I also visited Kilkeel on 15 February 2003 and met with representatives from various parts of the fishing industry. I have also had subsequent meetings with the fishing unions leading up to the Fisheries Council in December 2003.

Hospital Bed Shortages

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on bed shortages in Northern Ireland hospitals. [147195]

Angela Smith: Many of Northern Ireland's hospitals have come under considerable pressure in recent days, with large numbers of patients having to wait on trolleys for admission. In preparation for the pressure of winter, a significant range of additional services were put in place, including extra medical beds and enhanced facilities in primary care and community care services, which help to minimise the number of potential hospital admissions. An additional £7 million was allocated to support this extra service provision. Work is also well under way to increase overall hospital capacity and, over the past year, the number of available hospital beds has increased by over 70. A further 30 beds will be coming on stream later this year. To complement this expansion, an additional £6 million is being spent in the current year on providing extra community care services.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list information technology contracts in his Department with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146197]

Mr. Pearson: Only one contract of this size has been awarded within the Northern Ireland administration during the past 10 years.

In May 1998 the then Training and Employment Agency—an Agency within the then Department of Economic Development signed a 10 year PFI contract with ICL (now Fujitsu Services) for the provision of all IT hardware, data communication networks, office productivity software and Internet access for the former Agency. Additionally, the contract required the provision of two systems namely the Client Management System (CMS) and Trainee Management System (TMS).

Following the formation of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its constituent Departments the contract was extended to cover the increased number of staff in the newly formed Department of Higher and Further Education Training and Employment now the Department for Employment and Learning.

The hardware and office productivity software became fully functional in November 1998 on schedule, CMS went live on schedule in March 1999 and TMS became functional on 25 March 2002 some three months behind schedule.

There were no over-run costs and no major bugs needing remedial action.

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils aged 16 and over with moderate learning disabilities are enrolled in Northern Ireland schools, broken down by *(a)* age, *(b)* school and *(c)* education and library board area. [144220]

Jane Kennedy: Information for the 2003–04 school year is not yet available. From the 2002–03 school census, the numbers of pupils with statements of special educational need who had moderate learning difficulties were as follows:

	Number of pupils with MLD
(a) Age at 1 July 2002	
16	30
17	12
Total	42
(b) School name	
Ashfield boys' high school	1
Ashfield girls' high school	1
Ballymoney high school	1
Banbridge high school	1
Beechlawn special school	3
Belmont house special school	1
City of Armagh high school	6
Clounagh junior high school	1
Craigavon senior high school	1
Donaghadee high school	1
Fleming Fulton special school	6
Forthill college	1
Lakewood special school	1
Lurnegrove special school	4
Longstone special school	1
Maghera high school	1
Mitchell house special school	1

	Number of pupils with MLD
Monkstown community school	1
Orangefield high school	2
St. Columbanus's college	1
St. Eugene's high school	1
St. Genevieve's high school	1
St. Louise's comprehensive	1
St. Patrick's high school, keady	3
Total	42
(c) Education and library board	
Belfast	13
Western	6
	3
	8
Southern	12
Total	42

Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Promoting Social Inclusion Review Group was established; what its remit is; and what the *(a)* names and *(b)* positions of the members are. [144344]

Mr. Spellar: The Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on homelessness was established on 7 May 2003. Its remit is to consider how Government Departments, Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies can best work together to firstly, ensure that the risk of homelessness is reduced and secondly, that the full range of appropriate services is available to those who do find themselves homeless.

The names and positions of its members are available, together with minutes of the group's meetings and other supporting papers, on the Department for Social Development's internet site, at the following address:

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/housing/Social-Inclusion.asp

Saville Inquiry

Mr. Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what the cost of the Saville Inquiry has been so far; and what payments have been made to each of the legal firms involved in the Inquiry; [144181]

(2) when he will reply to the Question from the hon. Member for East Londonderry, tabled on 10 December 2003, ref 144181, on the Saville Inquiry. [147046]

Mr. Spellar: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for the delay in replying to his question. Some of the detailed information requested about payments to legal firms was not immediately available in the form requested. I shall write with the information shortly.

On the figures available at the end of December 2003 the cost of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry has been £127 million. The Northern Ireland Office has spent £103.5 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence advises me that his Department has spent £23.5 million.

Senior Civil Service

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what types of senior civil service posts were filled over the past 12 months; and how many of such posts were filled by public advertisement. [145102]

Mr. Pearson: Information on appointments to the Northern Ireland senior civil service is as follows:

	Total posts	Filled by public advertisements
Grade 2A (Permanent Secretary)	3	2
Grade 3 (Under Secretary)	7	1
Grade 5 (Assistant Secretary)	26	23

Shorts/Bombardier

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases have been submitted to the Labour Relations Agency for consideration by an industrial tribunal from workers at Shorts/Bombardier. [146309]

Jane Kennedy: Employment-related complaints are submitted direct to the Office of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal. All such applications are recorded in a public register and a copy of each is sent to the Labour Relations Agency, which seeks to promote a settlement of the complaint without need for a tribunal hearing.

In the calendar year 2003, 361 applications were made to industrial tribunals by Shorts/Bombardier staff. A breakdown of these by ground of complaint is provided below (some included more than one ground).

	Number
Unfair dismissal	[1]353
Redundancy payments	3
Breach of contract	4
Wages order	3
Disability	17
Sex discrimination	9
Trade union activities	1

[1] Includes "unfairly selected for redundancy" cases.

There were also 20 applications to the Fair Employment Tribunal by Shorts/Bombardier staff over the period.

TRANSPORT

A595

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the preparation and design of the Lillyhall to Parton improvement on the A595 in West Cumbria; when he expects the scheme to commence; and if he will make a statement. [146504]

Mr. Jamieson: Following the scheme's entry into the Government's Targeted Programme of Improvements in March 2001, a contract to design and build a new 5 km dual carriageway to bypass the communities between Parton and Lillyhall was awarded by the Highways Agency in December 2002. The Agency is currently developing the scheme in sufficient detail to enable the publication of draft orders under the

Highways Act, later this year. The public and other interested parties will have an opportunity to comment on the draft proposals and, if necessary, a public inquiry will be held to hear representations. Subject to completion of the statutory processes and availability of funding, construction could start in 2006. The scheme is expected to cost around £25 million and will bring much needed relief to the local communities.

Accident Rates

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the accident rates, including fatalities, for *(a)* single and *(b)* dual carriageway roads, including motorways. [146739]

Mr. Jamieson: In 2002, there were 42 accidents involving human injury or death per 100 million vehicle kilometres on single carriageway roads in Great Britain, and 38 per 100 million vehicle kilometres on dual carriageways.

Air Safety (Banned Airlines)

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which airlines are banned from the airspace of *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each EU country for which information is available; [147181]

(2) if he will make a statement on the availability of information to passengers travelling to and from the United Kingdom relating to airlines which are banned from the airspace of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* other European countries and *(c)* other countries. [147182]

Mr. McNulty: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 8 January, given to the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) *Official Report*, column 429W.

International civil aviation is governed by the Chicago Convention. Under the Convention the International Civil Aviation Organisation is responsible for establishing minimum safety standards. Contracting States are required to recognise the certificates of other Contracting States unless they have reason to believe that they have not been issued in accordance with ICAO standards. ICAO also audits Contracting States' aviation authorities to help identify and address any deficiencies in the implementation of international standards.

Any airline from outside the EU or EEA which wishes to pick up or put down passengers or cargo in the UK requires a permit from the Secretary of State. It is a condition of the permit that the airline should be operated in accordance with international safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Permits may be refused, suspended or revoked if the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to do so, taking into account any relevant information available to him, including the outcome of inspections of aircraft carried out by the Civil Aviation Authority at the request of the Department. We have now placed on the Department's web site information about UK permit action as set out in my answer of 8 January, which includes the reasons for and duration of such action. This information will be updated as appropriate.

We are not able to publish similar information with respect to permit action by other countries. Our inspections of foreign airlines are carried out in accordance with a procedure established under the European Civil Aviation Conference's Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft Programme, soon to be enshrined in European Community law. The results of inspections are entered on a central database and may be accessed by all ECAC States on the strict understanding that their use will be restricted to State organisations. The database includes information on some permit action by Member States, but what constitutes permit action varies from State to State. Some States include short restrictions on the use of an individual aircraft which may have been lifted before the report of the inspection reaches the database. The database cannot therefore be used to determine whether an airline currently has restrictions on its operations to an ECAC state. We are urgently considering with our ECAC colleagues how we can extend and refine the information on the database and whether it is possible for further information to be made public.

Approved Driving Instructors

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reason the Pizza, Pasta and Italian Food Association was consulted by the Driving Standards Agency regarding proposed changes to Approved Driving Instructor qualifications; and if he will make a statement. [146455]

Mr. Jamieson: The Driving Standards Agency issued its consultation paper in April 2003 to a wide range of organisations including national and local approved driving instructor associations, other driver and rider training groups, road safety officers, motoring organisations and other interested parties.

Among the proposals, the paper invited comments on increasing the theory test fee for all learner drivers and riders. This was considered of particular interest to, for example, organisations representing trainers and employers of motorcycle and moped riders. The paper was therefore sent to the Motorcycle Retail and Rider Training Associations and to the Despatch Association. A copy was also sent to the Pizza, Pasta and Italian Food Association whose members employ large numbers of moped riders for home delivery services, some of whom only hold provisional licences and could therefore be affected by the proposed fee increase.

Consulting representative organisations is a more effective way of reaching the individuals than trying to contact them individually and is in line with guidance in the Cabinet Office "Code of Practice on Written Consultation".

Asylum Seekers

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirements there are for asylum seekers to apply for a UK or international driving licence before driving on British roads. [146548]

Mr Jamieson: The requirements in relation to application for a driving licence in the United Kingdom are the same for asylum seekers as for everyone else. In order to be able to drive here all individuals must have the relevant driving entitlement.

Drivers who are resident in the United Kingdom and who hold a valid european Community/European Economic Area (EC/EEA) licence are entitled to drive until the expiry of the licence or until the driver becomes subject to British renewal at the age of 70.

Those who hold a non-EC/EEA driving licence or an international driving permit issued in another country may drive in the United Kingdom for the first 12 months from the date they become resident. To ensure continuous driving entitlement, a United Kingdom driving licence must be obtained before this period elapses. Drivers who hold a licence from a country which has been designated for licence exchange purposes must exchange their driving licence for a United Kingdom one. In the case of a country which has no exchange agreement, drivers must obtain a United Kingdom provisional licence and pass both the theory and practical parts of the driving test before being granted a full driving licence.

British Transport Police

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the annual cost of policing on the railways by the British Transport Police was in the latest year for which figures are available; and who meets the cost. [147034]

Mr. McNulty: The total expenditure of the British Transport Police during the financial year 2002–03 was £132.9 million. This was funded by the following contributions.

Organisation	*£million*
Train Operating Companies	61.4
Network Rail	35.1
London Underground Limited	31.2
Ad hoc income	4.2
Interest received	0.2
Previous years surplus	0.8

Crash Barriers

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 704W, on crash barriers, how many lorries crossed the offside crash barriers of dual carriageways and motorways in each of the last five years. [146055]

Mr. Jamieson: The information collected on road accidents does not identify whether a particular barrier was crossed.

Cyclists

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that *(a)* developers of new roads assess the needs of cyclists and *(b)* the findings of those assessments are incorporated at the planning stage; [146953]

(2) what advice he has given the Planning Inspectorate about meeting the needs of cyclists. [146955]

Mr. McNulty: Local authorities are required to prepare a strategy for the provision and improvement of routes and facilities for cyclists as part of their Local Transport Plan.

Advice on integrating planning and transport, including meeting the needs of cyclists, is set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 13. The Government's statements of planning policy are material considerations which must be taken into account, where relevant, in decisions on planning applications and appeals.

Road Safety (Motorways)

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the numbers of deaths and injuries on motorway hard shoulders as set out in the Transport Research Laboratory reports PR/TT/082/99 and PR/TT/069/98 (Table 7). [146520]

Mr Jamieson: The Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) report PR/TT/069/98 collates information on the usage and accidents on motorway hard shoulders. The TRL report PR/TT/082/99 analyses this data and uses it to establish patterns and frequencies of such accidents.

Both of these reports provided material for the SURVIVE Working Group, a cross-industry group funded by vehicle recovery operators in which the Highways Agency has participated. The Group's recommendations were published in "The SURVIVE Report on Hard Shoulder and Roadside Safety" in April 2000. These recommendations and the TRL reports continue to inform the Highways Agency's policy, advice and future research aimed at increasing the safety of those who need to stop or work on the hard shoulders of motorways.

Deep Vein Thrombosis

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will hold a public inquiry into the incidence, extent and causes of deep vein thrombosis amongst air travellers following the publication of research by the New Zealand Medical Research Institute; [146934]

(2) what steps he is taking to protect British air travellers following the research by the New Zealand Medical Research Institute published in The Lancet on 19 December 2003; [146935]

(3) what assessment he has made of the report of the New Zealand Medical Research Institute into the incidence of deep vein thrombosis amongst air travellers. [146936]

Mr. McNulty: The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology reported in November 2000 on the health aspects of air travel, including Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). The report identified the need for further research into air travel and DVT.

The Department for Transport has subsequently provided £0.8 million, and the Department of Health £0.4 million, to a World Health Organisation (WHO) research project into the incidence of DVT and the possible physiological mechanisms involved. The

European Commission is contributing a further £0.65 million. The results of the research are expected in early 2005.

The Government and the Civil Aviation Authority's Aviation Health Unit are aware of the research recently published by the New Zealand Medical Research Institute. Once the WHO work is completed, the Aviation Health Unit will advise the Government on what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

Advice on health and travel, given the present state of knowledge, is widely available to the public in the Department of Health's 'Health advice for Travellers' booklet and is under constant review. Advice has also been made available to the public through NHS Direct, the Internet, airlines and health services.

Drink Driving

Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years for which data are available the number of *(a)* fatal, *(b)* serious and *(c)* slight casualties in (i) road and (ii) other transport accidents involving illegal alcohol levels; and what the percentage change was for each category between each year. [144551]

Mr. Jamieson: The table shows fatal serious and slight casualties in road accidents where at least one driver had a blood alcohol level over the legal limit for the last five years.

Casualties in road accidents where at least one driver had a blood alcohol level over the legal limit.

Year	*Fatal*	*% change over previous year*	*Serious*	*% change over previous year*	*Slight*	*% change over previous year*
1998	460		2,520		15,590	
1999	460	0	2,470	-2	16,910	8
2000	530	15	2,540	3	18,060	7
2001	530	0	2,690	6	18,770	4
2002[1]	560	6	2,820	5	20,140	7

[1] Provisional data

The information requested in respect of casualties in rail accidents is not held centrally, and information is not available for air or marine accidents.

Transport Investment (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much investment there was in transport in *(a)* Cambridgeshire and *(b)* Huntingdon in each of the past five years. [146445]

Mr. McNulty: The figures provided relate to expenditure by Cambridgeshire county council and the Highways Agency. The Strategic Rail Authority was unable to provide figures for the railway industry as they do not have any records of expenditure by local authority area.

Total investment in transport by Cambridgeshire county council and the Highways Agency in each of the past five years was:

1998–99	*£ million*
(a)	7.6
of which	
(b)	2.5
1999–2000	
(a)	13.9
of which	
(b)	3.2
2000–01	
(a)	10.7
of which	
(b)	1.3
2001–02	
(a)	20.9
of which	
(b)	3.3
2002–03	
(a)	32.8
of which	
(b)	8.7
Total	
(a)	85.9
of which	
(b)	19.0

M5

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the report will be published on the impact of traffic flow on local roads following the opening up of Junction 12 of the M5 into a full junction. [146476]

Mr Jamieson: The report on the impact of traffic flows on local roads near Junction 12 of the M5 will be published in summer 2004.

Motorways

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway there are per 1,000 square kilometres in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* other EU countries. [146737]

Mr. Jamieson: The information requested is given in the Table as follows:

Miles of motorway per 1,000 square kilometres, 2001

United Kingdom	9
Austria	12
Belgium	35
Denmark	14
Finland	1
France	12
Germany	20
Greece	3
Irish Republic	1
Italy	13
Luxembourg	28
Netherlands	34
Portugal	11
Spain	12
Sweden	2

Post Office Closures

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect on traffic congestion of post office closures. [146954]

Mr. McNulty: Any traffic effects of the closure of individual post offices will depend on the location of alternative offices, transport links, choices made by individual customers and the many other factors which may contribute to any local congestion. If there were any significant effects I would expect local authorities to take account of them in their Local Transport Plans.

Road Safety

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer of 4 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 161W, on road safety, when he expects the studies he has commissioned to report. [147510]

Mr. Jamieson: The monitoring results of the traffic management scheme in Stiffkey, Norfolk were published in 2001 in TRL Report 500 Countryside Traffic Measures Group: Traffic calming schemes in Norfolk and Suffolk, and the summary report TRL Report 502 Countryside Traffic Measures Group: Demonstration schemes. The "Drivers and Traffic Calming" project team plans to report in spring 2005.

The findings of the European project on road markings are reported in COST 331 Requirements for Horizontal Road Marking: Final Report of the Action, which was published in 1999. This was a collaborative project and was not commissioned by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Road Surfaces

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the introduction of quieter road surfaces on *(a)* the M60 between junction 1 and junction 5 and *(b)* the M56 between junction 1 and junction 2; and what plans there are for introduction of further such surfaces. [147020]

Mr. Jamieson: The surfaces of the M56 and M60 Motorways at these locations are generally in good condition and low noise surfacing was used recently when the slip road leading from the M60 at Junction 4, to the M56, was widened. Under normal maintenance procedures, it will be necessary to resurface small sections of these motorways over the next two-three years, and low noise surfacing will be used. Full resurfacing using low noise materials will not be undertaken until a comprehensive renewal of the existing surface is needed.

The Highways Agency has plans to fully resurface the M60 between Junctions 1 and 2. In order to keep to a minimum any disruption to road users, the Highways Agency would wish to avoid work on this section of the M60 whilst widening is taking place between Junctions 5 and 8. That widening will include low noise surfacing and is due for completion in spring 2006.

The Government recognises that excessive noise from traffic is an important issue. Lower noise surfaces is used on the trunk road network for all new roads and for most resurfacing work.

Roads

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of the total land area of the UK is taken up by roads. [146736]

Mr. Jamieson: It is estimated that about 1 per cent. of the land area of the UK is taken up by roads.

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of dual carriageway there are per unit area in each county. [146738]

Mr. Jamieson: The information requested is given in the Table:

Miles of dual carriageway per thousand square miles, 2002

County	*Miles of dual carriageway per thousand square miles*
Avon	52
Bedfordshire	52
Berkshire	129
Buckinghamshire	57
Cambridgeshire	70
Cheshire	72
Cleveland	196
Cornwall	27
Cumbria	12
Derbyshire	60
Devon	35
Dorset	33
Durham	38
East Sussex	30
Essex	66
Gloucestershire	30
Hampshire	78
Hereford and Worcester	67
Hertfordshire	104
Humberside	33
Isle of Wight	10
Kent	73
Lancashire	40
Leicestershire	79
Lincolnshire	11
Norfolk	22
North Yorkshire	19
Northamptonshire	65
Northumberland	19
Nottinghamshire	72
Oxfordshire	42
Shropshire	15
Somerset	16
Staffordshire	64
Suffolk	38
Surrey	97
Warwickshire	47
West Sussex	78
Wiltshire	26
Greater Manchester	133
Merseyside	218
South Yorkshire	77
Tyne and Wear	321
West Midlands	317
West Yorkshire	97
Greater London	273
England	52

Stroud Station (Disability Discrimination)

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals are being made to permit Stroud station to become compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. [146475]

Mr. McNulty: The SRA is considering how best to prioritise a programme of works to meet the accessibility requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act at stations and will be consulting on draft criteria later this year.

Train Services (Northampton)

Ms Keeble: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the new timetables for Northampton train services will be ready; [146758]

(2) what consultation will be held on the new timetables for Northampton train services. [146759]

Mr. McNulty: Last year the Strategic Rail Authority consulted the rail industry, local authorities, passenger representatives and other stakeholders on the future pattern of service on the West Coast Main Line, including through Northampton. In June their 'West Coast Main Line Strategy' was published, indicating the likely level of service from September 2004 and beyond. The timetable for September 2004 has not yet been finalised, but it should be agreed at least 12 weeks prior to implementation, and made available to the public at least four weeks prior to the timetable change date. A further consultation on the emerging timetable will take place with key stakeholders, including rail user groups and Rail Passengers Committees, before it is finalised.

West Coast Main Line

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on *(a)* maintenance and *(b)* upgrade of the West Coast Main Line in each year since 1997; and what the purpose of the expenditure was in each case. [146570]

Mr. McNulty: Annual expenditure on the maintenance and upgrade of the West Coast Main Line is as follows:

£ million

	Maintenance	*Upgrade programme*	*Total*
1997–98	117	126	243
1998–99	118	170	288
1999–2000	115	313	428
2000–01	118	687	805
2001–02	123	781	904
2002–03	126	970	1,096
2003–04	126	1,536	1,662

The maintenance expenditure in the table is defined as that required to keep the existing railway infrastructure assets operational.

Upgrade programme expenditure relates to a range of activities intended to renew existing life-expired assets, and delivery of the associated enhancement works needed to increase line speeds and route capacity.

CABINET OFFICE

School Funding

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will make a statement on the work carried out by the strategy and delivery units on the method of funding schools. [147148]

Mr. Alexander: The Strategy and Delivery Units work across a range of areas in support of Ministers and Departments. In line with exemption 2 set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, internal discussion and advice remains confidential.

A list of the Strategy Unit's current public projects is available from its website: www.strategy.gov.uk.

WORK AND PENSIONS

War Disablement Pensioners

20. **Mr. Chaytor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the earnings disregard for war disablement pensioners in receipt of income support was last updated. [146802]

Malcolm Wicks: There is no specific earnings disregard for people receiving a war pension, although they can benefit from the standard disregards available to anyone claiming income support.

However, in recognition of the special nature of war disablement pension, there is a £10 disregard of these payments when assessing entitlement to income-related benefits.

Pensions Protection

21. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what action he is taking to ensure that workers who have lost their pensions through no fault of their own and are not covered by the pension protection fund are adequately compensated. [146803]

Malcolm Wicks: I have great sympathy for the difficulties faced by workers who have suffered pension losses.

I, and other Ministers; have been meeting those affected to discuss proposals, but do not wish to raise false hope on this matter.

Disability Benefits

22. **Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to undertake research into the take-up of disability benefits. [146804]

Maria Eagle: There are no current plans for research into the levels of take-up of disability benefits because entitlement to disability living allowance (DLA) and attendance allowance (AA) can be established reliably only after a claim has been made and the care and mobility needs of the customer assessed. There are no data available about who might be entitled to either DLA or AA if they were to make a claim, which means

that there is no reliable means of calculating the number of people receiving the benefits as a proportion of the eligible population.

Progress2Work

23. **John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the value for money of Progress2Work. [146805]

Mr. Browne: Our Progress2Work programme has been successful in helping more than 1,200 recovering drug misusers into work. And we will have extended this support across the country by April.

Although no formal cost benefit analysis has been carried out, available information indicates that it costs around £750 per year to help each person through progress2work. This certainly represents good value for money compared to the £37,500 it would cost to keep the same person in prison.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department is taking to promote the use of positive action within the public sector to combat age discrimination. [146427]

Malcolm Wicks: The Department for Work and Pensions is combating age discrimination in the workplace through our Age Positive campaign. Age Positive is vigorously promoting the business benefits of an age diverse workforce by encouraging employers in both the public and private sector to adopt the voluntary Code of Practice: Age Diversity at Work, A Practical Guide For Business.

The Age Positive campaign highlights the good practice of private and public sector employers—such as local authorities who promote age equality.

Age Positive targets the public sector through advertising, internet, specialist press—and exhibits at public sector events such as the annual conference of the Society of Personnel Officers in Government Services.

The Department for Work and Pensions was one of the first Departments to give people the choice of when they retire between the ages of 60 and 65. Many Departments have now given employees the choice and over 75 per cent. of civil service staff (outside the Senior Civil Service) now have the opportunity to stay on until they are 65. We have, in fact, responded to inquiries from staff seeking to work beyond 65 and introduced arrangements to allow them to do so.

Asylum Seekers

Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what initiatives his Department is taking to provide access to employment for asylum seekers who have been granted leave to remain. [146783]

Mr. Browne: We know that the level of unemployment among refugees is unacceptably high. We are taking positive action to reduce this such as: working more closely with the Home Office; engaging with community and voluntary groups; improving provision of English language and other training, and helping individuals to promote their skills to employers.

In September we published an interim report 'Working to Rebuild Lives': a preliminary report towards a refugee employment strategy and we will be publishing our full strategy later this year.

Bereavement Benefits

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many *(a)* widows and *(b)* widowers have been refused benefit on the grounds of being late claimants in each year from 1997 to 2002. [145979]

Mr. Pond: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Bereavement Benefits were introduced on 9 April 2001, and for the first time extended support to both widows and widowers following the death of a spouse. These new benefits concentrate the help available where it is most needed; on immediate needs and on families with children.

In April 2003 we extended the time limit for claiming Bereavement Payment to 12 months aligning it with the period over which a person can receive Bereavement Allowance.

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions by what means couples are made aware of the rules relating to bereavement benefits; and if he will make a statement. [146206]

Mr. Pond: Information is available from local Jobcentre Plus and Social Security offices, and the Department for Work and Pensions website gives information about Bereavement Benefits together with leaflets and claim forms for downloading. A fully revised version of leaflet NP45 "A guide to Bereavement Benefit" for professional advisers and members of the public was published in May this year. Leaflets D49 "What to do after a death in England and Wales" and D49S "What to do after a death in Scotland" are reviewed and revised as necessary annually.

In addition, we have been working with funeral directors, Registrars and voluntary groups such as Cruse, National Association of Widows and Citizens Advice Bureaux who may be contacted by bereaved people.

We have worked with Registrars to amend the social security form for notifying the Department of a death (BD8) to draw greater attention to the fact that it can be used to initiate a claim for bereavement benefits, this went to print in April 2003 and has been in use by Registrars since then. Within the last year we have also arranged for Funeral Directors to be able to obtain Bereavement Benefit claim packs so that they can be given directly to bereaved people.

We keep under review the way that information is made available about bereavement benefits so that bereaved people, at this very difficult time in their lives, know about their potential right to benefit and can act on it at the right time.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of parents who are waiting for their Child Support Agency cases to

be transferred from the old to the new scheme will pay *(a)* increased and *(b)* decreased payments under the new scheme. [140881]

Mr. Pond: Of those non-resident parents who are earning an income, about 60 per cent. will have a reduced maintenance liability and about 40 per cent. will have an increased liability.

Of those non-resident parents on benefit, about 60 per cent. will have an increased liability for maintenance. (Currently, 75 per cent. of non-resident parents on benefit are treated as having no liability; under the new scheme we expect them to pay a flat rate of £5 to the parent with care).

This data is based on an analysis carried out in 2001, and reflects the position had all cases converted to the new scheme on the day of the scan. Since then, average income levels of non-resident parents have increased, which would reduce the fall in the level of maintenance liabilities.

There are around a million live and assessed old scheme cases. Of those in work, we expect that a majority will have a reduced liability.

Disability Discrimination Bill

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the draft Disability Discrimination Bill. [146796]

Maria Eagle: We are determined to end the marginalisation and exclusion of disabled people from all walks of life—which is the lot of too many of our disabled fellow citizens today.

The draft Disability Discrimination Bill—along with other changes to the law which we are implementing, will represent, when we achieve its passage, a great progressive social advance—one which I hope will be supported by everyone in this House.

Disabled People

Jim Sheridan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress he has made in enabling disabled people to play a full and active role in society. [146801]

Maria Eagle: Good progress. For example we have legislated to extend the provisions of the DDA to education.

There has been a narrowing of the gap between the employment levels of disabled people and non-disabled people.

But more needs to be done.

In October we are implementing new obligations on service providers to remove, alter or avoid physical features which prevent disabled people accessing services. (Among others this will apply to MPs)

We are also extending the employment provisions of the DDA to more occupations and to almost all employers of whatever size. This will bring one million small employers and seven million more jobs into the protection of the Act.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he expects to publish estimates of take-up of income-related benefits for 2001–02. [145982]

Mr. Pond: Estimates of take-up of income-related benefits in 2001–02 will be released in February. The publication month has been pre-announced in Updates—the National Statistics diary of statistical releases. The precise date will be pre-announced through Updates.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Chaytor: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on his Department's plans to amend the terms and conditions of employees of the Department who serve as justices of the peace. [145382]

Maria Eagle *[holding answer 7 January 2004]:* The department's pay offer to its staff for 2003 for negotiation with its trade unions included proposals on performance bonus payments to be paid in addition to consolidated, pensionable pay. Under these proposals, the bonus payable would be performance related and take account of the total contribution made. It was envisaged it would be reduced proportionately for periods of absence beyond annual, public and privilege leave and other absences of five days or fewer. This provision was included as part of the effort to improve levels of attendance within the department. It could have had a limited effect on the bonus earnable by those, including justices of the peace, who were granted special leave by the department.

The department has decided that the new attendance condition will not form part of the 2003 pay offer. Any future change of this kind would be a matter for negotiation with the department's unions.

New Deal

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what *(a)* percentage and *(b)* value of New Deal contracts are delivered by (i) Jobcentre Plus, (ii) private companies and (iii) voluntary organisations; [144598]

(2) if he will list the *(a)* private companies and *(b)* voluntary organisations that have contracts to deliver New Deal support. [144599]

Mr. Browne: All contracts to deliver New Deal are awarded to external providers, from the private and not for profit sectors. Some New Deal advisory services are delivered by Jobcentre Plus, but these are not governed by a contractual process.

In 2002–03, total New Deal expenditure by Jobcentre Plus was approximately £812[1] million; of this, expenditure on New Deal contracts with the private and not for profit sectors amounted to £337 million, approximately 42 per cent. of the total. The remainder of the expenditure was on services delivered by Jobcentre Plus (£247 million) and on allowances paid to New Deal customers (£180 million) and other financial incentives (£48 million).

Jobcentre Plus contracts out New Deal provision to over 1,000 external providers and the details of these providers are held at regional and district level. Therefore, listing separately the private companies and voluntary organisations that have contracts to deliver New Deal support could be done only at a disproportionate cost.

[1] Estimated outturn

Benefits and Pensions Payment

Mr. Alan Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what procedures his Department will put in place to pay benefits and pensions from 2005 to clients who by that time have not nominated a bank or Post Office Card Account to receive their payments and whose order books have expired; [147323]

(2) whether non-respondents to his Department's letters about direct payment will be required to have payments made into a nominated account when order books are withdrawn in April 2005. [147069]

Mr. Pond: We have always recognised there will be some people, such as those who cannot open or manage any sort of account, and some immediate payments, such as Crisis Loans, that we cannot pay by Direct Payment. We are therefore designing an exceptions method of payment to meet the needs of people in these circumstances. We are in the process of discussing the design of the exceptions method of payment with the representative bodies most directly affected to design a secure and efficient method of payment which meets people's needs.

Until the exception method of payment is in place, customers who choose not to convert to Direct Payment will be able to retain their Order Book. But, they will not be able to keep it indefinitely as Order Books are being phased out.

Pension Credit

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners are not receiving their pension credit entitlement *(a)* in England and *(b)* in London; and if he will make a statement. [146784]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is not available in the form requested. However, we estimate that there are approximately 3.15 million pensioner households in England and 450,000 in London likely to be eligible for pension credit. While we want everyone who is eligible to take up their entitlement, we have to recognise that some may choose not to apply.

We have today published the latest monthly pension credit progress report, including numbers of recipient households in each parliamentary constituency in Great Britain.

It shows that we continue to make good progress. As at 31 December 2003, more than 2.5 million pensioners were receiving pension credit. In the hon. Member's constituency, 4,204 households are receiving pension credit with an average award of £58.62 per week.

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many *(a)* individuals and *(b)* households who had not previously been in receipt of the minimum income guarantee were in receipt of (i) the guarantee credit and (ii) the savings credit on (A) 14 October, (B) 11 November and (C) 10 December; [145983]

(2) how many *(a)* individuals and *(b)* households were being paid the pension credit on (i) 14 October, (ii) 31 October and (iii) 11 November; and how many of these had not been paid the minimum income guarantee. [146091]

Malcolm Wicks: Information for some of the dates referred to is not available in the format requested. The tables give information to the nearest dates for which information is available.

Recipients of Pension Credit, not previously in receipt of MIG: Great Britain as at October and November 2003

	17 October 2003		*30 November 2003*	
	Households	*Individuals*	*Households*	*Individuals*
Great Britain total	133,570	179,120	302,265	404,555
Guarantee credit only	8,740	11,455	27,215	35,820
Guarantee credit and savings credit	31,940	39,170	82,530	101,220
Savings credit only	92,895	128,495	192,520	267,515

Recipients of Pension Credit, in receipt or not in receipt of MIG: Great Britain as at October and November 2003

	17 October 2003		*30 November 2003*	
	Households	*Individuals*	*Households*	*Individuals*
Great Britain total	1,902,250	2,246,985	2,056,010	2,454,640
Previously on MIG	1,768,680	2,067,870	1,753,745	2,050,085
Previously NOT on MIG	133,570	179,120	302,265	404,555

Notes:

1. Figures are based on 100 per cent. Generalised Matching Service (CMS) data.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5
3. Figures might not sum due to rounding.
4. A household may be a single person or a couple. Figures for individuals show total numbers of individuals in households where Pension Credit is in payment, i.e. two individuals where Pension Credit is in payment to a couple, and include a small number of partners under age 60.

Source:

IAD Information Centre, 100 per cent sample

Pensions Payment

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in how many cases retirement pensions have not been paid into Post Office card accounts on their due date because of computer problems; and if he will make it his policy to put in place emergency payments in such cases. [147068]

Mr. Pond: We are aware of a recent issue that resulted in a slight delay in paying some State Pensions into Post Office card accounts. The actual number of payments that were affected is not known.

There are existing emergency payment procedures to cover the situation where payment is not made at the due time.

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what arrangements were made for early payment of pensions over the Christmas and new year period 2003–04 for holders of Post Office card accounts; and if he will make a statement. [146762]

Mr. Pond: The Department arranges that where customers are due payments on a public holiday, that payments are advanced so that they can get the money before the public holiday.

Payment to Post Office card accounts are paid in the same way as payments direct to any bank account. The arrangements put money into the account on the last banking day before each of the bank holidays namely the 24 December and 31 December.

Pension Protection Fund

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether he proposes that public sector pension schemes should be required to pay insurance premiums to the Pension Protection Fund; and if he will make a statement. [146966]

Malcolm Wicks: Public sector pension schemes that are protected by a Government guarantee would not require or be eligible to receive compensation from the Pension Protection Fund. Consequently, these schemes will not be required to pay the annual levy.

PRIME MINISTER

Commonwealth Caribbean Countries

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his meeting with prime ministers from Commonwealth Caribbean countries. [146430]

The Prime Minister: I met Commonwealth Caribbean leaders on 2 December. The leaders attending were the Prime Minister of Jamaica, at that time concurrently the Chairman of CARICOM, the President of Guyana and the Prime Ministers of the Bahamas, Belize, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia. The CARICOM Secretary-General and the Director General of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery also attended.

On trade, we agreed on the importance of getting the Doha development round moving again and of working to ensure that changes to trade regimes are phased so that vulnerable Caribbean economies can adjust. On security we discussed the threat to the region of drug trafficking and gun crime and the way that these problems affect the UK. We are exploring ways in which we can enhance our security cooperation.

The Government have also offered to facilitate an event in the Caribbean looking at best practice in tackling stigmatisation and discrimination of those with HIV/AIDS.

E-government

Mr. Key: To ask the Prime Minister which departments of Government besides the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have responsibilities for e-government at *(a)* parish council and *(b)* town council levels; and if he will make a statement. [147429]

The Prime Minister: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has sole responsibility in Central Government for local e-Government. It works closely with the Office of the e-Envoy on policy and infrastructure issues such as the Government Gateway. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister consults with other Government Departments on cross cutting issues affecting local e-government policy as and when appropriate and works closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the development of the role of town and parish councils.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147302]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer the Financial Secretary at the Treasury gave to him today.

During 2003 as in other years, I set out the Government's policy on the euro in speeches, media appearances and of course in Parliament. Copies of my speeches are available on the Number 10 website.

Iraq

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to assist the Iraqi Governing Council in organising free and fair elections; and if he will make a statement. [146512]

The Prime Minister: On 15 November, the Iraqi Governing Council announced plans for establishing a transitional national assembly formed through caucus elections at provincial level.

The assembly will be elected no later than 31 May 2004, leading to the creation of a new transitional administration by the end of June 2004. This will be followed by elections for a constitutional convention, leading in turn to national elections for a new representative Iraqi Government by the end of 2005

We will assist the Iraqis during this process in any way we can.

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the library the Iraq Survey Group report and its annexes listing the massive network of laboratories and

factories engaged in the production of weapons of mass destruction referred to in his Christmas broadcast to British forces in Iraq on 16 December 2003. [146580]

The Prime Minister: The leader of the Iraq Survey Group, Dr. David Kay, presented an unclassified summary report to the US authorities on 2 October 2003, copies of which were placed in the libraries of both Houses. This summary report contains numerous references to a clandestine network of laboratories in Iraq.

The full report, which was shared in confidence with other principal coalition partners, contains detailed and operationally sensitive information and is highly classified. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to give information on intelligence and security matters, under exemption 1 of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Prime Minister on what date after 9 September 2002 he was informed that the weapons of mass destruction referred to in the September 2002 dossier which could be deployed in 45 minutes were battlefield mortar shells or small calibre weaponry. [147190]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friends, the Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on 27 October 2003, *Official Report*, column 50W.

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his letter to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent, of 28 October 2003, if he will list *(a)* the titles of each of the UK-owned documents in respect of Iraqi procurement of uranium from Niger to which he refers and *(b)* the dates on which each document respectively was provided to (i) the International Atomic Energy Agency and (ii) the UN Special Commission on Iraq; and how the Government sought to ensure that the owners of other intelligence of which it had been informed about the Niger uranium procurement by Iraq made the IAEA aware of its contents. [147621]

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Rammell), said in his answer on 1 September 2003, *Official Report*, column 805W and I reiterated in my letter of 28 October, the UK did not provide any documentation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or UNMOVIC on Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from Africa.

On the issue of how the Government sought to ensure that the owners of other intelligence about Niger uranium procurement by Iraq made the IAEA aware of this, I refer my hon. Friend to the answers the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. MacShane) and the Under-secretary of State (Mr. Rammell) gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones) on 7 July 2003, *Official Report*, column 579W and 1 September 2003, *Official Report*, column 805W.

Ministerial Visit (Basra)

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the library a copy of a transcript of his remarks to journalists on board his flight from Basra on 4 January. [146581]

The Prime Minister: Any comments I made en route to Basra on 4 January were made on the record and were fully reported by the media at the time in the same way as any briefings I make on visits like this.

Russia

Tom Brake: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 57W, on Chechnya, how many *(a)* meetings, *(b)* telephone calls and *(c)* letters he has exchanged with President Putin since 18 June 2003. [147081]

The Prime Minister: I last met President Putin on 26 June during his State Visit to the UK and we discussed a wide range of issues including Chechnya.

I regularly discuss either by telephone or through correspondence a wide range of issues with President Putin.

As with previous Administrations, it is not the practice of this Government to make public details of all discussions I have with foreign leaders.

Taskforces

Mr. Randall: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the task forces he has set up since 1997; when each last reported; and when he expects each to have completed its task. [147237]

The Prime Minister: Information on task forces in existence between May 1997 and October 2000 was made available in three reports published in January, July and December 2000 on "Task Forces, Ad Hoc Advisory Groups and Reviews".

For the years 2001–02 and 2002–03, this information has been included in the publications 'Public Bodies 2002' and 'Public Bodies 2003' respectively.

Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House.

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with *(a)* President Bush and *(b)* Mr. Romano Prodi since 14 September 2003 on the need to resume trade negotiations following the termination of the World Trade Organisation Ministerial in Cancun. [146637]

The Prime Minister: I regularly have discussions with President Bush and Mr. Prodi on a wide range of international issues including on trade.

The Government are committed to working with our international partners to restart the Doha Development Round at the earliest opportunity.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Deprivation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to include measures of *(a)* the state of the physical environment and *(b)* crime and disorder in revised indices of deprivation; and what methodology will be used to measure these [146108]

Yvette Cooper: It is proposed that the revised Indices of Deprivation 2000 (ID 2000) should include new domains to cover the living environment and crime and disorder.

For the Living Environment domain, indicators have been proposed to cover both the quality of the 'indoors' living environment and the 'outdoors' physical environment. In respect of the latter, the two indicators proposed are:

'Air quality' based on data held on the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory; and

'Road Traffic Accidents involving injury to pedestrians and cyclists' based on data available from the Department of Transport's STAT19 database. This data will provide an indictor of the risk of injury to non-motorised road users.

The purpose of the Crime domain is to measure the incidence of recorded crime, representing the occurrence of personal and material victimisation at a small area level. It is proposed that four composite indicators are constructed (burglary, theft, criminal damage and violence) covering some 33 different categories of recorded crime. These indicators will be constructed either using full recorded crime data from the 39 geographic regional police forces or if this is not possible, full recorded crime data for the majority of the police forces but modelled crime data for the areas that are unable to provide recorded crime data.

E-Government

Mr. Key: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) how much of the e-Government budget has been *(a)* allocated to and *(b)* spent on (i) parish councils and (ii) town councils; and if he will make a statement; [147427]

(2) whether *(a)* parish councils and *(b)* town councils are included in the e-Government targets for local authorities to be on line by 2005; and if he will make a statement. [147428]

Phil Hope: The Government's target to see all services electronically enabled by 2005 only applies to local authorities and fire authorities who are subject to the Best Value Performance Indicator 157, and does not apply to town and parish councils.

As they are not subject to this target, parish councils are not being funded directly under the £675 million Local e-Government Programme. However, many councils are working very successfully with local parish councils to both support their websites and to build local parish content into community public portals. Our National Strategy for Local e-Government encourages all councils to have this joined-up approach to providing local online services and information. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is funding 66 Local e-Government Partnerships to provide Community Portals, which will include local parish content.

Emergency Planning

Mr. Soames: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what role will be played by local authorities in the South East of England in the event of the mass evacuation of London; and what recent discussions he has had with them on contingency plans for the mass evacuation of London; [147284]

(2) what plans there are to use towns in the South East of England in the event of the mass evacuation of London; [147285]

(3) what role the A23 would play in the event of the mass evacuation of London; [147286]

(4) what plans are in place for the mass evacuation of London in the event of a major emergency; [147287]

(5) what plans are in place for the evacuation of hospitals and prisons in the event of the mass evacuation of London. [147288]

Mr. Raynsford: Mass evacuation of parts of London, or any other area, would be very much a last resort.

However, as part of its role in making sure London is as well prepared as possible to cope with any emergency situation, the London Resilience partnership has been carrying out generic planning for the temporary evacuation of areas of London in the event of this being necessary. The local authorities and emergency services in the surrounding counties, including the South East of England, have been actively involved in this work and have had detailed discussions over the past year with officials in the London Resilience Team and the Regional Resilience Team based in the Government Office for the South East.

The principal role of local authorities in the event of any serious emergency, whether or not it necessitates mass evacuation, is to provide support for the people in their area; in general this will involve close co-operation with the emergency services. In the event of mass evacuation of areas of London being required, the local authorities in the surrounding counties—including those in the South East of England as need be—would be involved in providing initial rest and reception facilities for evacuees.

We do not make publicly available detailed contingency plans for meeting specific needs on responding to particular types of incident.

Emergency Tri-Service Centre

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what recent assessment has been made of the operation of the Emergency Tri-Service Centre in Gloucestershire. [146569]

Mr. Raynsford: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has made no assessment of the operation of the Emergency Tri-Service centre in Gloucestershire. The Government's consultants, Mott MacDonald, looked at shared control arrangements while undertaking work to update their April 2000 report "The Future of Fire Service Control Rooms and Communications in England and Wales". The latest report was published on 11 December 2003 and copies are available in the Library of the House.

EU Regional Funding

Ann Winterton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what organisations responsible for the distribution of European Union regional funding currently operate in the *(a)* North East, *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(c)* North West regions; and what organisations in each of those areas are in receipt of such funding. [146683]

Mr. Raynsford: The distribution of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in England is the responsibility of Government Offices for the Regions. The Government Offices for the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber respectively distribute funds to recipient organisations in their regions.

A variety of public, private and voluntary sector organisations in these areas receive ERDF. A list of recipients of ERDF during the current 2000–06 programming period will be available in the Libraries of the House. ERDF supports measures such as the development of sites and premises for industry and businesses; transport infrastructure; support for small and medium sized enterprises; tourism; research and development; and community economic development.

Firefighters

Norman Lamb: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister for what reason the budget of the Arson Control Forum is projected to rise from £1.36 million in 2002–03 to £4.02 million in 2003–04 and to £4.80 million in 2005–06. [146420]

Mr. Raynsford: Since 2001 the Arson Control Forum has funded 50 local pilot projects designed to reduce arson. The increased budget recognises their success and will enable the forum to fund additional projects, due to be announced shortly, which build on the lessons learned from the original pilots.

Local arson reduction projects are essential to achieve the Government's target to reduce by 10 per cent. the number of deliberate fires by March 2010 from the 2001–02 baseline, as published in the Fire White Paper 'Our Fire and Rescue Service'. This target is a key objective in the Government's plans to reform the fire and rescue service which include increased emphasis on fire prevention work. This objective was reiterated in the draft Fire and Rescue National Framework, published on 11 December 2003.

Housing

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research he has commissioned on the growth of holiday homes in areas where there is a perceived shortage of affordable housing, with particular reference to pressure on local services. [146631]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has not commissioned any research on this topic. However, the annual Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Survey of English Housing (SEH) estimates the number of households in England with a second home including the number of those categorised as Holiday Home/Retirement Home/Weekend Cottage. The report on the 2001/02 SEH is available in the Library of the House.

Jon Trickett: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of cost of improving the Wakefield council housing stock to the Government's prescribed standards. [147454]

Keith Hill: The Deputy Prime Minister has not made any estimate of the cost of improving the Wakefield council housing stock to the Government's prescribed standards. This is for the council to determine as part of its business planning process. Based on the findings of an independent stock condition survey, commissioned by Wakefield Metropolitan District Council in 2002, it has been estimated that it will cost £236 million (at today's prices) to bring all public sector stock up to the Government's decent homes standard by year 2010.

Housing Stock Transfer

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which local authorities have still to ballot local authorities tenants on transfer of their housing stock. [146978]

Keith Hill: There are a total of 10 local authorities on the 2003 LSVT Programme who have yet to ballot their tenants. They are as follows:

Forest Heath District Council
London Borough Islington (two partial transfers)
London Borough Lambeth (three partial transfers)
Manchester City Council (three partial transfers)
Middlesbrough
North East Lincolnshire
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time firefighters were employed by the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service in each of the last five years. [146977]

Mr. Raynsford: The information requested is tabled as follows:

Number of firefighters employed by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

Date	*Wholetime*	*Retained*
31 March 1999	1,007	402
31 March 2000	1,008	398
31 March 2001	1,010	371
31 March 2002	1,002	357
31 March 2003	1,015	369

Source:
Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Annual Returns to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Leasehold

Sue Doughty: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on progress made to implement the provisions of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 which will allow leaseholders of houses to select their own insurer. [146678]

Keith Hill: It is anticipated an Order will be made by May 2004 to bring into force the remaining provisions of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002. These provisions include those relating to property insurance, to the new Right to Enfranchise companies, and to accounting and forfeiture. Commencement dates will vary depending on the lead-in period needed by landlords to prepare for the changes, but the provisions relating to insurance should be effective by September 2004.

Local Authorities

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many new *(a)* statutory and *(b)* regulatory requirements were placed on local authorities in (i) 2001, (ii) 2002 and (iii) 2003. [147238]

Mr. Raynsford: This information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, our arrangements for the funding of local authority revenue spending in any year take into account the cost pressures and new burdens on local government including those identified with the Local Government Association in the context of the relevant Spending Review.

Sheltered Housing

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what recent action the Government has taken to promote sheltered housing; and if he will make a statement on the provision of sheltered housing in York and North Yorkshire. [145125]

Yvette Cooper: The Government is committed to ensuring that all vulnerable people receive the housing-related support they need including, where appropriate, sheltered housing and associated support services such as provision for wardens, to help them improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment, enabling greater independence. The Supporting People programme, introduced in April 2003, provides an integrated framework for planning and funding housing-related support services.

In February 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister , the Department of Health and the Housing Corporation jointly published Preparing Older People's Strategies—linking housing to health, social care and other local strategies. Local authorities are encouraged to use it as part of drawing up local delivery and capacity plans for older people's services, which includes working in partnership with housing authorities. It stresses that older people's strategies on housing need to engage with and consult older people.

In York and North Yorkshire the following housing schemes for older people included in Housing Corporation programmes for 2002–03 and 2003–04 are being funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister through the Housing Corporation:

Stokesley, Hambleton: 40 units of extra-care accommodation.

Hospital of James Knowles, Craven: Improvements to seven units of almshouse accommodation.

St. Georges, Harrogate: 12 units of warden supported housing.

Swan Hill, Scarborough: Approximately 18 units of warden supported housing.

In York there are currently 595 tenancies in council sheltered housing schemes and a further 887 tenancies in the independent sector. Over the next year York council will be improving facilities in two of its sheltered schemes to provide the potential to deliver 78 extra-care tenancies.

Tenancy Deposits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the proportion of completed tenancies requiring independent adjudication under the pilot voluntary tenancy deposit scheme was; and if he will estimate the proportion of completed tenancies that would require independent adjudication under a statutory tenancy deposit scheme. [147052]

Keith Hill: The Independent Housing Ombudsman, who managed the pilot voluntary tenancy deposit scheme, has no information on the proportion of completed tenancies requiring independent adjudication under those schemes. That is because the terms of reference of the pilot scheme did not require that the number of completed tenancies should be recorded.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has no reliable estimate of the number of disputes that would require adjudication under a statutory tenancy deposit scheme. The Survey of English Housing 2001–02 noted that some 20 per cent. of households with a tenancy ending in the previous three years claimed to have had their deposit unreasonably withheld in full or in part. The number of disputes, for which independent adjudication might be required under any statutory arrangements for tenancy deposit protection, might well be lower than this figure.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the number of private tenants who have had their tenancy deposit unreasonably withheld in each of the last five years, broken down by Government office region. [147053]

Keith Hill: The information is not currently available. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as the information is available.

Thames Gateway

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the average residential density was of housing developments given planning permission since March 2000 in the boroughs that make up the London part of the Thames Gateway, as defined by RPG9a: The Thames Gateway Planning Framework. [146844]

Keith Hill: Information relating to the average residential density of housing development in the boroughs that make up the London part of the Thames Gateway is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what *(a)* criteria and *(b)* milestones have been established for monitoring the implementation of the Government's plans for the Thames Gateway; and who is responsible for carrying out the necessary monitoring. [146845]

Keith Hill: The Government's plans for the Thames Gateway are set out in "Creating Sustainable Communities: Making It Happen in the Thames Gateway and Growth Areas", published on 30 July 2003. That document makes it clear that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be establishing a Gateway delivery office to work alongside local, regional and national partners to turn strategic plans into operational programmes. The Gateway Office will be responsible for monitoring implementation of the Government's plans. It is anticipated that the Office will be up and running shortly.

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister in respect of the new communities that are envisaged in the Thames Gateway, what plans the Government have for the adoption of standards for access to community infrastructure, with particular reference to *(a)* schools, *(b)* health care facilities, *(c)* leisure facilities and *(d)* open spaces. [146846]

Keith Hill: The information is as follows:

(a)(b)(c) For the Thames Gateway and elsewhere, planning policy (in particular Planning Policy Guidance 13) makes it clear that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services should be accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

In addition, the Social Exclusion Unit's "Making the Connections" report, published in February 2003, sets out a strategy to help people on low incomes access work, food shops and key public services, notably education and health care. This includes the approach of accessibility planning in those areas that produce a Local Transport Plan, where local transport planners and others work together to examine accessibility needs and how to overcome barriers. Accessibility planning is currently being piloted and various accessibility indicators are under consideration.

(d) Well-designed and managed open spaces are an essential ingredient of thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities in the Thames Gateway and elsewhere. Our planning policies (set out in Planning Policy Guidance 17) require a robust assessment of the existing and future needs of communities for open space, guiding their provision and management, and allow local authorities to set local standards to meet the identified needs of their community.

Yorkshire and Humber Housing Board

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) how much has been allocated to the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Housing Board for 2003–04; and how much of this is allocated by them to *(a)* repairs and renovation of council housing and *(b)* privatisation of council housing; [146422]

(2) how much has been allocated in the current financial year by the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Housing Board to gap funding for privatisation of council housing to *(a)* north-east Lincolnshire and *(b)* other local authorities; and what the allocation of gap funding per council property is in each area which has received it. [146423]

Keith Hill: 2003/04 was the last year for which housing capital allocations were made to local authorities on the old basis of recommendations made to Ministers by Government Offices (the Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Housing Board was not therefore involved). As was standard, 80 per cent. of the resources available were allocated using a needs-based formula and 20 per cent. according to performance. Local authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber had an allocation of £65.9 million. This was for authorities to use according to their own priorities, without having to identify specific purposes such as repair and renovation of council housing or supporting stock transfers.

Under the new arrangements (introduced last year in the Communities Plan) the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Housing Board recommended capital allocations to local authorities totalling £76 million for 2004–05 and £81 million for 2005–06. The recommendations, which we accepted, included a fixed sum based on a needs-based formula (95 per cent. in 2004–05 and 70 per cent. in 2005–06 of what they would have received under the old arrangements).

The balance is being used to commission proposals to deliver regional housing strategy priorities, and, in 2005–06, £10 million for 'transformational proposals' of regional significance, which deliver one or more of the regional housing strategy priorities. The Board has said that it will consider applications for gap funding from this £10 million in specific circumstances. Gap funding proposals have been submitted by north-east Lincolnshire and one other local authority. I understand that the Regional Housing Board will be considering at its meeting on 22 January all proposals submitted.

Separate from the above, local authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber also benefited from support for capital investment through the major repairs allowance (current figures are £172 million in each of 2003–04 and 2004–05). This allowance, calculated formulaically, covers the bulk of support for the repair and renovation of council housing.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Asylum Seekers

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children seeking asylum who have arrived in the UK are missing from care. [144996]

Margaret Hodge: At 31 March 2003, the most recent date for which information is available, there were 15 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children missing from their agreed placements within local authority care in England. Information is not collected by this Department on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are in care in other parts of the UK.

Child Care

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many extra child care places have been created in each year since 1997; [145266]

(2) how many child care places have been created in the 20 per cent. most disadvantaged wards in each year since 1997. [145269]

Margaret Hodge: The available information is shown in the table.

New child care places[1]

	New child care places, England[2]	*New child care places net of closures, England*[2]	*New child care places net of closures, 20 per cent. most disadvantaged wards in England, estimated*[3]
1997–98	7,500	6,000	n/a
1998–99	66,200	53,000	n/a
1999–2000	133,000	67,800	n/a
2000–01	168,200	87,000	n/a
2001–02	139,800	82,800	41,800
2002–03	185,400	87,300	59,600

[1] All figures relate to financial years and are rounded to the nearest hundred places. Child care places are defined to include: places for pre-school children which last three-and-a-half hours or longer per day, in day nurseries or with childminders; places for children receiving nursery education which, combined with the nursery education, total at least three-and-a-half hours per day; and places for statutory school age children aged up to 14 (16 for those with special educational needs or disabilities) in breakfast or after school clubs or with childminders for any length of time, or in holiday play schemes of three and a half hours or longer per day.

[2] Figures from 1999–2000 onwards are drawn from local authorities' quarterly child care returns. Figures for 1997–98 and 1998–99 relate only to child care places directly funded by Government.

[3] This information was not collected prior to 2001–02. Figures are drawn from local authorities' Early Years Development and Childcare Plans, and reflect their estimated position at 31 March 2002 and 31 March 2003.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much funding has been made available for child care for each year since 1997. [145267]

Margaret Hodge: As published in the Department for Education and Skills Departmental Report 2003, expenditure was:

£ million

	Sure Start	*Early Years and Childcare*	*Total*
1997–98	—	1,203	1,203
1998–99	—	1,349	1,349
1999–2000	7	1,486	1,493
2000–01	56	1,652	1,708
2001–02	134	1,823	1,957
2002–03	210	2,114	2,324

Note:

The 2002–03 expenditure quoted reflects actual expenditure as opposed to the estimates contained in the Departmental Report.

The Early Years and Childcare figures include early education funding (Under Fives Block) to local authorities.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many registered child minders there were in England and Wales in each year since 1997. [145268]

Margaret Hodge: Figures are only available for England. Child care is a devolved issue.

Data on the number of registered child minders was recorded by the Day Care Facilities Study from 1997 to 2001. In September 2001 Ofsted took over the registration of places and undertook a 'cleansing' exercise to delete all registered childminders who were no longer operating. This exercise was undertaken throughout 2001–02, therefore there are no figures available for registered child minders for 2002. Ofsted published their March 2003 data in June.

Registered child minders 1997–2003 are as follows:

	Number
1997	98,500
1998	94,700
1999	82,200
2000	75,600
2001	72,300
2002	n/a
2003	68,200

Although there was a constant decline in childminders year on year to 2003, the number of child minders is now showing a steady increase month on month. Ofsted data at September 2003 shows an increase in the number of operational child minders of 2,000 since March 2003.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many childcare places there are in England. [145662]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Ofsted. The HM Chief Inspector, David Bell, will write to the hon. Member and a copy of his letter will be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the Government are doing to extend the availability of affordable, good quality child care. [146259]

Margaret Hodge: The Government have funded a major expansion in child care through their National Childcare Strategy. Since 1997, 808,000 new places have been created, benefiting well over 1.4 million children. Following the more than doubling in child care expenditure agreed as part of the 2002 Spending Review, the number of children benefiting from new places will rise to over 2 million by 2006.

Specific initiatives such as Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and our new Children's Centres, are extending high quality child care in disadvantaged communities, increasingly provided alongside early education and health and family support.

Our National Standards set a benchmark of quality below which no registered child care provider should fall and Ofsted inspects against these Standards.

Substantial help with child care costs is provided to lower and middle income families through the child care element of the working tax credit. The Chancellor announced new plans in his Pre Budget Report in December to encourage employer supported child care from April 2005 through tax exemptions of up to £50 per week for employees.

Child Protection

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children were considered at risk from abuse in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in 2002–03. [145691]

Margaret Hodge: Details of the number of children and young people on child protection registers in England for the period 2002–03 will be published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on Thursday 29 January 2004.

At 31 March 2002 there were 25,700 children and young people on child protection registers in England, just over 4 per cent less than a year earlier.

Information is not collected by DfES on the number of children who are considered at risk from abuse in Wales.

Food Technology

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the number of hours spent each week teaching food technology in years one to nine; and what proportion of that time involves practical cooking skills. [146346]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: No estimate has been made of the amount of time schools spend on teaching food technology. Food technology is part of the design and technology curriculum, and, as with all subjects, it is for individual schools to plan their timetable. Schools allocate time to each subject to meet the needs of their pupils and to fulfil the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. 'Designing and Timetabling the Primary Curriculum', published in 2002 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and 'Designing the Key Stage 3 Curriculum', published by DfES in 2002 provide guidance for schools.

We are encouraging schools to undertake more practical cookery as part of our joint Food in Schools programme with the Department of Health.

Free School Meals

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have fallen below the 20 per cent. threshold of pupils taking free school meals in the past five years. [145424]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: The information is given separately for pupils taking free school meals and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in primary and secondary schools over the last five years.

Maintained primary and secondary schools[1]: proportion of school population known to be eligible for a free school meal.
Position in January each year 1999 to 2003—England

Maintained Primary Schools	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
Number of schools by proportion of school population known to be eligible for free school meals[2]					
Below 20 per cent.	12,230	12,368	12,534	12,639	12,631
20 per cent. and over	6,004	5,790	5,535	5,346	5,230
Total number of schools	18,234	18,158	18,069	17,985	17,861
Percentage of schools by proportion of school population known to be eligible for free school meals[3]					
Below 20 per cent.	67.1	68.1	69.4	70.3	70.7
20 per cent. and over	32.9	31.9	30.6	29.7	29.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintained Secondary Schools					
Number of schools by proportion of school population known to be eligible for free school meals[2]					
Below 20 per cent.	2,367	2,397	2,421	2,491	2,502
20 per cent. and over	1,193	1,153	1,060	966	934
Total number of schools	3,560	3,550	3,481	3,457	3,436
Percentage of schools by proportion of school population known to be eligible for free school meals[3]					
Below 20 per cent.	66.5	67.5	69.5	72.1	72.8
20 per cent. and over	33.5	32.5	30.5	27.9	27.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.

[2] Prior to 2001 figures relate to number of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal. From 2001 this definition was expanded to include only pupils who were known to be eligible for and claiming a free school meal.

[3] Number of schools in each band expressed as a percentage of all schools.

Source:
Annual Schools' Census

Maintained primary and secondary schools[1]: proportion of school population who took a free school meal
Position in January each year 1999 to 2003—England

Maintained Primary Schools	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
Number of schools by proportion of school population taking a free school meal[2]					
Below 20 per cent.	13,602	13,601	13,870	13,865	13,735
20 per cent. and over	4,632	4,557	4,199	4,120	4,126
Total number of schools	18,234	18,158	18,069	17,985	17,861
Percentage of schools by proportion of school population taking a free school meal[3]					
Below 20 per cent.	74.6	74.9	76.8	77.1	76.9
20 per cent. and over	25.4	25.1	23.2	22.9	23.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintained Secondary Schools					
Number of schools by proportion of school population taking a free school meal[2]					
Below 20 per cent.	2,845	2,839	2,858	2,870	2,856
20 per cent. and over	715	711	623	587	580
Total number of schools	3,560	3,550	3,481	3,457	3,436
Percentage of schools by proportion of school population taking a free school meal[3]					
Below 20 per cent.	79.9	80.0	82.1	83.0	83.1
20 per cent. and over	20.1	20.0	17.9	17.0	16.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.
[2] Proportion of school population taking a free school meal on the day of the Census in January.
[3] Number of schools in each band expressed as a percentage of all schools.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census

Information Technology

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps he is taking to increase the information technology skills of teaching staff. [146660]

Mr. Charles Clarke: A range of materials to enable teachers to fully embed ICT in their subject teaching have been developed. Materials covering Key Stage 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy, including Foundation Stage, and Key Stage 3 science were launched in 32 LEA areas last year. These subjects, together with Key Stage 3 English, maths, art, geography, design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages were formally launched nationally at the BETT2004 Exhibition at Olympia this week. Further subjects will follow later. In addition to the materials, extensive one-to-one mentoring and online peer group support are an integral part of these courses.

The Department has contracted a number of commercial providers to develop these materials and schools are able to buy into them using Standards Fund money.

Training in the effective use of ICT in teaching is a mandatory part of Teacher Training Institute training courses.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what measures are in place to promote recruitment of teachers of information and communication technology. [146664]

Mr. Miliband: From September 2000, £6,000 training bursaries have been offered to postgraduate trainee teachers. £4,000 Golden Hellos are also available to those who go on to teach priority subjects, including information and communication technology, in a maintained school. Since September 2002, these incentives have been reinforced by the Repayment of Teachers' Loans scheme piloted for three years for new teachers of priority subjects. These incentives have helped to more than double recruitment to courses of initial teacher training in information and communication technology between 1999/2000 and 2003/04.

KPMG Services

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list the services to be provided to schools by KPMG which he announced on 29 October, including the number of schools to be visited and the expected average duration of that visit; and if he will make a statement on changes in the extent and scope of the work in the period since he first announced the programme. [145614]

Mr. Stephen Twigg *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* KPMG and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), in consultation with key stakeholders including local authority, teacher and governor associations, have jointly developed a range of budget management support for schools, including online materials, workshops and consultancy services. The programme of workshops, which will be rolled out from January to March 2004 will be available to 1,000 schools and follow-up surgeries will be available, on a regional basis, for up to 125 schools with pressing and complex problems. The website containing online support materials was launched on 15 December and is available to all schools, as will be the central helpdesk, run by NCSL and available from this month.

Maintenance Grants

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment his Department has made of the implications of raising the level of maintenance grants above £1,000. [147241]

Alan Johnson: I refer my hon. Friend to the Regulatory Impact Assessment, published on 8 January, which sets out the costs and benefits of introducing a new national grant of up to £1,000 a year from 2004/05 for students from low income families, and of increasing the grant to £1,500 a year from 2006/07. Copies of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

Off-site Educational Visits

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent advice has been issued to schools and teachers about arrangements for off-site educational visits. [145796]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: My Department has published:

"Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits (2002)"[1]

"Standards for Adventure (2002)"[1]

"A Handbook for Group Leaders (2002)"[1]

"Group Safety at Water Margins (2003)"—produced with the Central Council of Physical Recreation

[1] These supplement "Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: A Good Practice Guide 1998"

Pupil Absences

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 16 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 836W, on pupil absences, if he will break down the number of half days lost due to unauthorised absence in *(a)* 1997–98 and *(b)* 2002–03 by local education authority. [146470]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* The information requested is shown as follows:

Unauthorised absence in maintained primary and secondary schools in England, 1997/98 and 2002/03

	Academic year 1997/98			*Academic year 2002/03*		
	Total possible sessions	*Number of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*	*Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*	*Total possible sessions*	*Number of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*	*Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*
Barking and Dagenham	6,960,095	105,543	1.52	7,459,186	119,169	1.60
Barnet	11,942,107	77,882	0.65	11,778,740	87,718	0.74
Barnsley	8,743,218	103,801	1.19	9,345,586	95,717	1.02
Bath and North East Somerset	6,612,203	25,869	0.39	6,550,822	37,512	0.57
Bedfordshire	15,385,361	57,620	0.37	16,147,095	55,529	0.34
Bexley	9,197,337	38,296	0.42	10,093,091	54,322	0.54
Birmingham	43,684,482	516,068	1.18	44,600,995	453,883	1.02
Blackburn with Darwen	6,863,979	68,232	0.99	6,933,373	54,619	0.79
Blackpool	5,523,173	61,956	1.12	5,565,569	54,300	0.98
Bolton	12,305,786	114,299	0.93	12,111,994	85,928	0.71
Bournemouth	5,496,631	43,585	0.79	5,532,530	21,680	0.39
Bracknell Forest	3,787,557	13,079	0.35	3,899,460	16,946	0.43
Bradford	21,921,765	357,869	1.63	20,822,223	316,047	1.52
Brent	8,491,833	65,143	0.77	9,333,083	56,144	0.60
Brighton and Hove	7,140,966	59,889	0.84	7,892,669	75,869	0.96
Bristol, City of	12,740,007	153,001	1.20	12,638,508	173,184	1.37
Bromley	11,518,807	54,438	0.47	11,965,363	87,561	0.73
Buckinghamshire	18,547,877	51,341	0.28	19,108,430	84,148	0.44
Bury	7,786,809	40,038	0.51	7,949,847	37,419	0.47
Calderdale	9,117,237	46,840	0.51	9,108,847	47,033	0.52
Cambridgeshire	19,309,270	105,432	0.55	20,308,069	110,359	0.54
Camden	5,377,029	78,679	1.46	4,890,033	55,645	1.14
Cheshire	27,648,326	137,638	0.50	27,850,790	168,179	0.60
Cornwall	19,103,370	72,092	0.38	19,713,625	77,577	0.39
Coventry	12,977,784	99,842	0.77	12,528,870	71,501	0.57
Croydon	11,982,517	67,594	0.56	12,811,239	110,841	0.87
Cumbria	20,114,014	67,279	0.33	20,279,090	100,163	0.49
Darlington	4,220,750	31,946	0.76	4,015,669	23,798	0.59
Derby City	9,496,622	76,289	0.80	9,776,185	87,290	0.89
Derbyshire	28,990,500	184,011	0.63	30,650,557	202,425	0.66
Devon	24,941,506	114,542	0.46	25,992,151	154,447	0.59
Doncaster	13,055,709	149,394	1.14	12,885,981	120,776	0.94
Dorset	14,147,822	56,849	0.40	14,544,725	55,073	0.38
Dudley	12,221,676	46,843	0.38	13,630,374	80,903	0.59
Durham	20,105,892	146,200	0.73	20,027,339	73,511	0.37
Ealing	9,864,678	84,732	0.86	9,957,712	48,907	0.49
East Riding of Yorkshire	12,690,313	66,481	0.52	13,492,330	57,494	0.43
East Sussex	16,296,427	120,771	0.74	17,884,590	148,004	0.83
Enfield	11,731,951	111,415	0.95	12,036,439	173,070	1.44
Essex	51,192,177	292,106	0.57	52,313,880	305,488	0.58
Gateshead	7,741,720	76,121	0.98	7,405,780	42,292	0.57
Gloucestershire	22,252,023	67,411	0.30	22,707,564	82,832	0.36
Greenwich	8,612,526	172,048	2.00	8,999,902	166,073	1.85
Hackney	6,386,670	101,078	1.58	6,528,327	105,774	1.62
Halton	5,849,448	53,627	0.92	5,438,109	69,126	1.27
Hammersmith and Fulham	3,481,002	65,994	1.90	4,056,354	48,180	1.19
Hampshire	46,126,635	244,954	0.53	47,696,466	315,381	0.66
Haringey	7,816,702	128,095	1.64	8,201,203	143,333	1.75
Harrow	7,844,823	43,429	0.55	7,781,906	25,072	0.32
Hartlepool	4,051,517	53,341	1.32	4,307,027	51,843	1.20
Havering	9,427,217	37,739	0.40	9,572,671	37,431	0.39
Herefordshire	6,546,757	24,019	0.37	6,809,255	31,673	0.47
Hertfordshire	42,043,377	180,011	0.43	43,498,050	229,107	0.53
Hillingdon	9,259,142	97,442	1.05	10,170,299	111,853	1.10
Hounslow	8,416,806	77,565	0.92	8,603,901	95,439	1.11
Isle of Wight	4,983,329	20,365	0.41	5,110,221	30,031	0.59
Isles of Scilly	64,884	121	0.19	63,326	441	0.70
Islington	6,191,369	105,073	1.70	5,950,006	80,662	1.36
Kensington and Chelsea	2,381,581	41,502	1.74	2,561,091	24,846	0.97
Kent	51,645,835	238,420	0.46	55,108,122	279,301	0.51
Kingston upon Hull, City of	11,278,575	222,041	1.97	10,656,454	156,049	1.46
Kingston upon Thames	4,781,603	24,577	0.51	5,043,212	17,616	0.35
Kirklees	17,076,263	172,467	1.01	16,922,012	129,658	0.77
Knowsley	7,353,050	116,731	1.59	7,062,038	112,257	1.59

Unauthorised absence in maintained primary and secondary schools in England, 1997/98 and 2002/03

	Academic year 1997/98			*Academic year 2002/03*		
	Total possible sessions	*Number of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*	*Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*	*Total possible sessions*	*Number of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*	*Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence*
Lambeth	6,616,896	88,978	1.34	6,769,620	62,317	0.92
Lancashire	48,581,138	258,625	0.53	48,954,065	266,747	0.54
Leeds	28,744,260	337,757	1.18	28,933,535	319,327	1.10
Leicester City	12,734,281	143,282	1.13	12,689,113	194,712	1.53
Leicestershire	26,006,408	141,512	0.54	26,533,381	174,417	0.66
Lewisham	8,258,734	150,844	1.83	8,709,699	136,429	1.57
Lincolnshire	24,181,115	133,479	0.55	27,067,264	138,489	0.51
Liverpool	19,660,250	267,289	1.36	18,892,558	200,971	1.06
London, City of	50,796	976	1.92	54,342	0	0.00
Luton	8,026,192	58,169	0.72	8,507,459	54,672	0.64
Manchester	17,161,916	300,544	1.75	16,811,825	200,799	1.19
Medway	11,210,947	71,279	0.64	11,633,094	60,413	0.52
Merton	5,779,338	80,513	1.39	5,441,153	41,819	0.77
Middlesbrough	6,305,740	61,431	0.97	5,983,567	40,771	0.68
Milton Keynes	8,583,082	41,480	0.48	9,305,084	40,801	0.44
Newcastle upon Tyne	10,027,943	86,336	0.86	9,579,712	83,829	0.88
Newham	11,225,046	281,582	2.51	11,719,076	150,900	1.29
Norfolk	27,851,813	169,643	0.61	30,114,741	206,752	0.69
North East Lincolnshire	7,461,441	83,474	1.12	7,303,691	67,923	0.93
North Lincolnshire	6,833,885	45,071	0.66	6,678,118	36,530	0.55
North Somerset	7,101,334	42,540	0.60	7,457,736	51,788	0.69
North Tyneside	7,893,708	35,662	0.45	7,806,945	37,468	0.48
North Yorkshire	22,193,981	60,788	0.27	23,726,431	83,564	0.35
Northamptonshire	26,199,295	166,709	0.64	27,575,895	197,952	0.72
Northumberland	13,095,643	48,321	0.37	12,637,969	36,493	0.29
Nottingham City	10,522,642	234,731	2.23	9,902,153	132,671	1.34
Nottinghamshire	30,194,615	262,053	0.87	31,091,195	279,326	0.90
Oldham	11,049,488	124,707	1.13	10,797,455	103,252	0.96
Oxfordshire	21,882,823	174,275	0.80	22,084,106	145,787	0.66
Peterborough City	7,314,293	56,346	0.77	7,527,333	51,405	0.68
Plymouth	10,407,858	61,045	0.59	10,018,234	41,800	0.42
Poole	4,894,319	27,561	0.56	5,053,137	33,897	0.67
Portsmouth	6,978,696	84,443	1.21	6,887,267	74,618	1.08
Reading	4,501,271	51,138	1.14	4,136,438	42,177	1.02
Redbridge	9,567,710	58,420	0.61	10,443,598	76,663	0.73
Redcar and Cleveland	6,476,772	44,796	0.69	6,529,839	39,005	0.60
Richmond upon Thames	5,387,735	26,734	0.50	5,220,053	56,648	1.09
Rochdale	9,343,930	102,814	1.10	9,479,481	90,003	0.95
Rotherham	11,850,034	120,999	1.02	11,956,554	100,738	0.84
Rutland	1,403,662	5,284	0.38	1,425,488	4,570	0.32
Salford	9,059,496	100,157	1.11	8,984,375	106,531	1.19
Sandwell	12,717,785	130,452	1.03	12,772,004	121,645	0.95
Sefton	12,468,268	54,426	0.44	11,857,845	51,244	0.43
Sheffield	19,498,865	299,826	1.54	20,013,151	254,156	1.27
Shropshire	10,593,845	43,335	0.41	11,182,692	31,787	0.28
Slough	4,326,982	33,062	0.76	4,920,858	52,245	1.06
Solihull	9,534,393	32,823	0.34	9,504,941	52,417	0.55
Somerset	18,108,993	68,241	0.38	19,244,019	85,716	0.45
South Gloucestershire	9,731,927	54,168	0.56	10,708,139	73,654	0.69
South Tyneside	6,721,986	13,403	0.20	6,299,568	25,145	0.40
Southampton	8,370,654	83,610	1.00	7,973,689	68,754	0.86
Southend-on-Sea	6,357,832	64,139	1.01	6,756,687	63,343	0.94
Southwark	8,364,744	169,937	2.03	8,962,748	157,226	1.75
St. Helens	7,672,838	25,640	0.33	7,687,463	53,720	0.70
Staffordshire	33,514,654	117,250	0.35	34,312,098	151,716	0.44
Stockport	11,448,314	85,358	0.75	11,585,776	62,960	0.54
Stockton on Tees	8,663,358	36,079	0.42	8,255,696	36,991	0.45
Stoke on Trent	10,021,352	74,166	0.74	9,675,615	106,045	1.10
Suffolk	24,952,935	87,289	0.35	26,223,004	186,328	0.71
Sunderland	13,251,439	83,350	0.63	12,607,404	65,400	0.52
Surrey	34,191,515	105,248	0.31	35,480,270	208,644	0.59
Sutton	7,035,996	27,419	0.39	7,587,605	35,024	0.46
Swindon	7,818,601	47,772	0.61	7,896,788	32,009	0.41
Tameside	10,187,487	69,146	0.68	10,062,696	39,554	0.39
Telford and Wrekin	6,725,805	48,127	0.72	7,047,540	26,477	0.38
Thurrock	5,806,143	60,881	1.05	5,889,829	58,493	0.99
Torbay	4,688,784	21,167	0.45	4,956,923	43,381	0.88
Tower Hamlets	8,452,799	184,708	2.19	8,914,070	138,820	1.56
Trafford	9,260,873	47,595	0.51	9,253,299	34,771	0.38
Wakefield	14,043,287	102,408	0.73	14,085,535	106,245	0.75
Walsall	12,284,583	105,354	0.86	12,241,652	80,325	0.66
Waltham Forest	8,773,590	125,645	1.43	8,983,932	81,085	0.90

Unauthorised absence in maintained primary and secondary schools in England, 1997/98 and 2002/03

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Wandsworth	6,660,268	66,109	0.99	6,749,010	52,766	0.78
Warrington	8,723,569	33,278	0.38	8,723,891	41,370	0.47
Warwickshire	20,146,407	86,938	0.43	19,977,522	91,302	0.46
West Berkshire	6,162,872	17,882	0.29	6,268,303	28,747	0.46
West Sussex	26,795,598	100,465	0.37	28,012,548	130,965	0.47
Westminster, City of	4,388,316	91,418	2.08	4,515,826	48,561	1.08
Wigan	14,582,708	108,771	0.75	13,789,031	57,062	0.41
Wiltshire	16,265,723	68,496	0.42	17,041,153	74,818	0.44
Windsor and Maidenhead	4,895,304	17,719	0.36	4,981,077	27,205	0.55
Wirral	14,086,710	87,329	0.62	13,900,770	65,200	0.47
Wokingham	6,246,147	21,320	0.34	6,078,808	24,143	0.40
Wolverhampton	9,695,286	109,925	1.13	10,263,693	82,080	0.80
Worcestershire	20,828,048	114,354	0.55	21,152,365	105,058	0.50
York, City of	5,753,137	26,843	0.47	6,488,028	49,413	0.76
Total	1,944,289,663	14,673,753	0.75	1,987,988,695	14,355,433	0.72

Notes:
1. Figures relate to maintained primary and secondary schools but exclude maintained special schools and CTCs.
2. Figures cover absences between September 1997 and May 1998, and September 2002 and May 2003.

School Fruit Scheme

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much the Government have spent centrally on administering the National School Fruit Scheme in *(a)* 2001–02 and *(b)* 2002–03; and if he will make a statement. [141789]

Miss Melanie Johnson: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Health spent £0.75 million in 2001–02 and £0.3 million in 2002–03 on administering and evaluating National School Fruit Scheme pilots, including the cost of the fruit. In 2002–03 and 2003–04 the lottery-funded New Opportunities Fund has been supporting a scaling-up of the original pilots region by region with £42 million. From 2004–05 the scheme will be rolled out to all local education authority infant schools in England with full funding by the Department of Health.

School Meals

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) if he will make a statement on provision of school meals by Essex county council; [146625]

(2) what statutory requirements there are on local education authorities to provide school meals; and if he will make a statement. [146627]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: Local education authorities have a duty to provide free and paid for school meals that meet nutritional standards. Where a school has a delegated budget for meals, the governing body takes on these responsibilities. From April 2000, funding for school meals was delegated to all secondary schools. Primary and special schools can opt for delegation.

From April 2004, Essex county council will delegate the budget for primary school meals. Primary school governing bodies will have the freedom to choose what form school meals should take, including the type of dishes served and the ingredients which are used. They can also choose the suppliers or providers for the school meal service.

Specialist Schools

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in each local education authority area have specialist school status in the current financial year; and what the total funding made available in the current financial year under the programme is in each local education authority area. [145430]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Designated specialist schools receive a one-off £100,000 capital grant and £126 per pupil per annum for four years.

Specialist schools funding by LEA report for 2003–04

£

LEA Name	*Total Funding 2003–04 (£)*	*Number of specialist schools*
Barking & Dagenham, LB of	637,982	4
Barnet, LB of	1,400,119	10
Barnsley	631,933	4
Bath & North East Somerset	1,385,143	10
Bedfordshire	1,060,517	7
Bexley, LB of	609,235	5
Birmingham	4,861,060	38
Blackburn with Darwen	528,500	4
Blackpool	603,594	4
Bolton	1,651,324	9
Bournemouth	608,875	4
Bracknell Forest	301,000	2
Bradford	1,781,843	11
Brent, LB of	1,302,371	9
Brighton and Hove	841,701	5
Bristol, City of	789,803	6
Bromley, LB of	1,425,131	9
Buckinghamshire	1,885,833	14
Calderdale	1,046,325	7
Cambridgeshire	2,407,356	18
Camden, LB of	680,375	5
Cheshire	3,011,815	21
City of London	0	0
Cornwall	2,320,077	16
Coventry	968,516	6
Croydon, LB of	735,258	6
Cumbria	3,540,915	24
Darlington	580,922	5
Derby, City of	629,194	4
Derbyshire	2,343,109	16

Specialist schools funding by LEA report for 2003–04

£

LEA Name	Total Funding 2003–04 (£)	Number of specialist schools
Devon	3,270,554	20
Doncaster	1,535,445	9
Dorset	1,919,353	14
Dudley	1,198,763	9
Durham	2,550,898	20
Ealing, LB of	1,267,111	8
East Riding of Yorkshire	1,464,165	9
East Sussex	2,577,255	18
Enfield, LB of	328,699	2
Essex	7,217,790	46
Gateshead	751,263	5
Gloucestershire	3,926,911	28
Greenwich, LB of	700,126	6
Hackney, LB of	779,704	7
Halton	413,875	3
Hammersmith & Fulham, LB of	284,923	2
Hampshire	4,338,545	30
Haringey, LB of	648,152	5
Harrow, LB of	548,165	6
Hartlepool	411,750	3
Havering, LB of	1,188,314	8
Herefordshire	692,196	5
Hertfordshire	5,579,233	37
Hillingdon, LB of	926,375	6
Hounslow, LB of	992,544	6
Isles of Scilly	0	0
Isle of Wight	254,875	2
Islington, LB of	381,593	3
Kensington & Chelsea, RB of	257,858	2
Kent	5,207,511	34
Kingston upon Hull, city of	613,000	4
Kingston-u-Thames, RB of	976,994	6
Kirklees	1,519,864	11
Knowsley	381,375	3
Lambeth, LB of	613,353	5
Lancashire	4,487,863	33
Leeds	3,227,501	21
Leicester City	1,016,220	8
Leicestershire	2,048,541	13
Lewisham, LB of	366,896	2
Lincolnshire	4,553,025	38
Liverpool	2,392,400	16
Luton	256,500	2
Manchester	1,769,033	11
Medway	781,750	6
Merton, LB of	125,000	1
Middlesbrough	707,465	5
Milton Keynes	950,282	6
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,334,875	8
Newham, LB of	1,111,689	7
Norfolk	2,955,519	22
North East Lincolnshire	719,232	5
North Lincolnshire	745,308	7
North Somerset	1,063,262	7
North Tyneside	956,324	7
North Yorkshire	2,584,621	17
Northamptonshire	2,367,376	17
Northumberland	1,119,750	9
Nottingham, City of	652,711	5
Nottinghamshire	2,789,941	19
Oldham	844,542	6
Oxfordshire	2,946,909	18
Peterborough, City of	791,218	5
Plymouth, City of	1,338,399	10
Poole	832,872	6
Portsmouth	598,918	4
Reading	338,489	2
Redbridge, LB of	1,520,892	10
Redcar & Cleveland	283,625	2
Richmond-upon-Thames, LB of	583,125	4
Rochdale	721,449	5
Rotherham	1,368,703	8
Rutland	190,125	2
Salford	401,876	3
Sandwell	947,509	6
Sefton	823,534	7
Sheffield	1,798,106	12
Shropshire	2,201,918	17
Slough	364,125	4

Specialist schools funding by LEA report for 2003–04

£

LEA Name	Total Funding 2003–04 (£)	Number of specialist schools
Solihull	1,240,467	8
Somerset	3,477,083	25
South Gloucestershire	1,418,522	8
South Tyneside	297,625	2
Southampton	615,152	4
Southend-on-Sea	955,243	7
Southwark, LB of	566,474	5
St. Helens	803,417	5
Staffordshire	2,752,296	20
Stockport	512,610	3
Stockton-on-Tees	804,226	6
Stoke-on-Trent	938,782	7
Suffolk	2,459,391	18
Sunderland	1,613,043	10
Surrey	3,398,169	23
Sutton, LB of	930,155	6
Swindon	562,019	3
Tameside	742,838	5
Telford and Wrekin	559,060	4
Thurrock	589,584	4
Torbay	493,875	3
Tower Hamlets, LB of	733,994	6
Trafford	1,569,225	12
Wakefield	1,855,223	11
Walsall	2,364,868	15
Waltham Forest, LB of	680,990	5
Wandsworth, LB of	834,442	6
Warrington	949,121	6
Warwickshire	2,528,359	18
West Berkshire	1,433,404	10
West Sussex	2,386,266	14
Westminster, LB of	352,000	3
Wigan	1,597,818	12
Wiltshire	1,821,207	13
Windsor & Maidenhead, RB of	783,000	4
Wirral	1,283,875	10
Wokingham	599,125	4
Wolverhampton	998,174	8
Worcestershire	2,134,630	15
York, City of	846,255	7

Teaching Methods

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 669W, if he will make a statement on the relationship between ability grouping and *(a)* personalised learning and *(b)* teaching tailored to the needs of pupils; and what the role of central government is in implementing these teaching practices. [145527]

Mr. Miliband: Ability grouping is one measure by which schools can personalise the learning and tailor teaching to the needs of pupils. However, it is possible to identify a list of benefits and limitations for the main kinds of ability grouping at the level of the institution, teacher and pupil. It is for schools within the context of their particular circumstances to develop and determine for themselves which forms of ability grouping have the most positive impact for different groups of pupils within different learning contexts (such as different subject areas).

Through the primary and Key Stage 3 national strategies we will be making available to teachers later this year support in assessment for learning techniques and approaches to promote personalised learning.

Toilet Training

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the number of children who have been adequately toilet trained prior to entry to school. [146728]

Margaret Hodge: My Department has not assessed how many children have been adequately toilet trained prior to entry to school.

Value Added Improvements

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps he is taking to address difficulties in assessing value added improvements in secondary schools where part of their intake have not previously been evaluated in terms of SATS and teacher assessment. [146560]

Mr. Miliband: Value added measures for schools can only be calculated using existing data. Given that all pupils of compulsory school age attending maintained mainstream schools follow the National Curriculum, there are only a very small number who were not assessed at the end of the earlier key stage—for example, only 3 per cent. of 15-year-olds had no prior attainment data at Key Stage 3 in the 2003 performance tables.

Though most schools will be unaffected, we accept that a small number might have a significant proportion of pupils with no prior attainment data—for example, pupils from overseas. This is why we publish a coverage indicator in the performance tables which shows the percentage of pupils on which the value added calculation is based.

HEALTH

Genital Mutilation

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate the Government have made of the number of women who have undergone genital mutilation in *(a)* St. Helens and *(b)* Merseyside in each of the last five years; and what estimate has been made of the total number of women in the UK who have undergone genital mutilation. [146045]

Miss Melanie Johnson: No estimate has been made of the number of women who have undergone female genital mutilation in St. Helens and Merseyside in the last five years or the national total.

Access to GPs

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what right of free access British citizens have to treatment at a GP practice other than that at which they are registered if *(a)* they are registered with a different practice but are resident in the UK and *(b)* they are UK citizens living outside the UK. [146355]

Mr. Hutton: Any person is entitled to receive emergency or immediately necessary treatment from any general practitioner if that treatment is necessary. In addition, anyone who is temporarily in an area for more than 24 hours but less than three months, including a United Kingdom citizen visiting from overseas, may register as a temporary resident to receive national health service primary medical services.

Accident and Emergency Departments (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many admissions to accident and emergency departments in Cambridgeshire there were in each of the past 12 quarters, broken down by hospital. [146448]

Dr. Ladyman: Information on the number of admissions to accident and emergency departments is published quarterly for each national health service trust, and is available from the Department's website at www.doh.gsi.gov.uk/hospitalactivity.

Copies of this information are also available in the Library.

The only acute NHS trust in Cambridgeshire is Addenbrooke's NHS Trust.

Accident and Emergency Nurses

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered nurses work in general accident and emergency units in England. [145666]

Mr. Hutton: Separate information is not collected on the number of nurses employed in accident and emergency units in the national health service. Qualified accident and emergency nurses are included in the 'Acute, elderly and general' area of work. As at September 2002 there were 187,439 nurses employed in the acute, elderly and general area of work in the NHS, an increase of 9,535 over the previous year and 27,505 since 1997.

ADHD UK Alliance

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on how grants made by his Department to the ADHD UK Alliance have been spent. [143804]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 16 December 2003]:* The Department of Health has given the ADHD UK Alliance a one-year grant of £25,000 as a contribution towards the central administrative costs of their activities in England. This grant supports our priorities in child and adolescent mental health by resourcing an organisation, which in turn, will help the development of the many small support groups in the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) field. We have also previously supported the ADHD UK Alliance when they were part of the organisation, Contact a Family.

Agency Staff

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost of agency *(a)* nurses and *(b)* doctors has been to the NHS in Huntingdon in each year since 1999. [146444]

Dr. Ladyman: The information is not collected in the format requested. The tables show the available information regarding the national health service trusts that cover the Huntingdon constituency.

(a) Non-NHS 'Nurses'[1] NHS expenditure in Huntingdon: 1999–2000 to 2002–03[2]

£

Non-NHS 'nurses'[1]	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03[2]*
Hinchingbrook Healthcare NHS Trust	900,387	887,916	965,681	256,352
Cambs and Peterborough MH Partnership Trust	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,237,493
Cambridgeshire Health Authority	0	0	0	n/a
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Strategic Health Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust	n/a	n/a	0	0
Total	900,387	887,916	965,681	2,493,845

[1] 'Nurses' = Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Staff.
[2] 2002–03 data are provisional.

(b) Non-NHS 'Doctors'[1] NHS expenditure in Huntingdon: 1999–2000 to 2002–03[2]

£

Non-NHS 'doctors'[1]	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03[2]*
Hinchingbrook Healthcare NHS Trust	369,121	404,724	530,833	477,535
Cambs and Peterborough MH Partnership Trust	n/a	n/a	n/a	880,861
Cambridgeshire Health Authority	615	133	0	n/a
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Strategic Health Authority	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust	n/a	n/a	0	269,952
Total	369,736	404,857	530,833	1,628,348

[1] 'Doctors' = Medical Staff.
[2] 2002–03 data are provisional.

Sources:
1. Annual Financial Returns of NHS Trusts 1999–2000 to 2002–03.
2. Annual Financial Returns of Health Authorities 1999–2000 to 2001–02.
3. Annual Financial Returns of Strategic Health Authorities 2002–03.
4. Annual Financial Returns of Primary Care Trusts 2000–01 to 2002–03.

Approved Treatments

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that patients are not taken off treatments which have not been approved by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence for non-medical reasons and transferred to those which have been so approved. [145387]

Miss Melanie Johnson: This is a matter which needs to be resolved at a local level according to the individual circumstances. Clinicians have a prime responsibility to prescribe treatments appropriate for the individual patient. In doing so, they should take full account of National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance and the evidence on which it is based.

Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress being made towards the implementation of the Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust Franchise Plan. [146489]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 8 January 2004]*: Further to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Salford (Ms Blears), on 20 May 2003, *Official Report*, col.736W, I understand from the Surrey and Sussex Strategic Health Authority that significant progress continues to be made on the franchise plan for Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals National Health Service Trust as follows:

Ongoing implementation of the £10 million capital programme, including completion of the day case surgery expansion, new ward which is part of a medical assessment unit scheme and new child care nursery at Ashford

Refurbishment of the maternity unit and a new playscheme at St. Peter's

14 per cent. increase in qualified nursing staff

Year on year stability in the workforce

Provision of more affordable housing for key worker staffing under Government schemes

Improved collaborative working with local primary care trusts, social services and local authorities

Achievement of Improving Working Lives (IWL) 'Practice' Status

Moving from being a zero star in 2001 to two star trust in 2003

Since April 2003, in line with the franchise plan, Glenn Douglas has been the Trust's Chief Executive.

Ashford Hospital, Middlesex

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress being made towards finalising the contract with Mercury Health Ltd to provide and run a diagnostic treatment centre at Ashford Hospital, Middlesex; and how many procedures per year he expects to be carried out at the new centre. [146502]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 8 January 2004]*: The Department, working with local National Health Service sponsors, is making good progress towards finalising a contract for the provision of an independent sector treatment centre at Ashford. The treatment centre plans to provide treatment for 1,711 patients on average annually.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether Ashford Hospital, Middlesex, has an Accident and Emergency Department. [146543]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 8 January 2004]*: Ashford Hospital, Middlesex, which is part of the Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals National Health Service Trust, has an emergency department which deals

with all medical emergencies and walking wounded. The accident and emergency department at St.Peter's Hospital in Chertsey handles trauma cases.

Assistive Technology

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how assistive technology research and development are being monitored and evaluated. [146228]

Miss Melanie Johnson: An annual report on progress made in Government-funded research and development relating to assistive technology is required pursuant to Section 22 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The report for 2002 was laid before the House on 27 November 2003. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Audiology

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action the Government is taking to guarantee that everyone in Dorset who can benefit from a digital hearing aid provided on the NHS will have received one by April 2005; [145050]

(2) how many people in Dorset he estimates may benefit from digital hearing aids; and what proportion of these will have been fitted with digital hearing aids by 1 April *(a)* 2004 and *(b)* 2005. [145051]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* The question of whether someone can benefit from a digital hearing aid is one of clinical judgment. The Modernising Hearing Aid Services Project, in which the Government are investing £94 million for the two financial years 2003–04 and 2004–05, will ensure that all audiology departments in England will be fitting digital hearing aids routinely by April 2005.

BCG Vaccination

Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children are awaiting BCG vaccination as a result of the interruption in its administration between August 2002 and the beginning of 2003; and if he will make a statement. [144389]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 18 December 2003]:* No schoolchildren should have missed out on the opportunity of receiving BCG vaccination.

There were no supplies of BCG vaccine from August to November 2002, following Evans Vaccines' voluntarily withdrawal of all batches of their BCG as a precautionary measure after discovering, during stability testing, that a number of batches did not comply with the requirements of their registered specifications for potency during its shelf life. This was a decision taken by the company outside of our control and was wholly unexpected.

However, district immunisation co-ordinators were asked to arrange catch-up programmes for children in their areas who may have missed out receiving their BCG immunisation once supplies were available from 25 November 2002.

Blood

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the safety of blood plasma and other blood products sourced in the USA following the positive testing for BSE in the USA; [146333]

(2) what additional safeguards he has put in place to ensure the safety of US-sourced blood plasma following the confirmation of BSE in US cattle. [146334]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The arrangements currently in place for importing blood plasma from the United States are based on the objective to secure long term supplies of non-United Kingdom blood plasma to ensure that the global plasma shortage would not reduce to national health service patients the availability of life saving plasma products, such as immunoglobulins and clotting factors.

The NHS has been using US sourced plasma since 1998 because of the unknown and unquantifiable risk of transmission of vCJD through blood. The US was the only country able to supply the quality and quantity of plasma required. The US also has a well established pool of donors, a well regulated environment and a developed collection industry. We are aware of the one case of BSE reported in the US, which is considered to be a negligible risk to the safety of the blood supply. This case is not in itself a reason to alter current arrangements but we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list regulatory and advisory bodies responsible to his Department dealing with blood safety. [145695]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The regulatory and advisory bodies responsible to the Department of Health for blood safety are the National Blood Authority and the Government expert Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transplantation.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics his Department collates on the incidence of blood borne diseases in recipients of blood products; and if he will make a statement. [145448]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Statistics on the incidence of blood borne diseases in recipients of blood products are not collected centrally.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when blood testing for contaminated blood product-induced infections was started *(a)* with consent and *(b)* without consent; and if he will make a statement. [143396]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The safety of blood and blood products used in the National Health Service is of paramount importance. The current high levels of safety are achieved by screening out potential high-risk donors and then further testing of every unit of donated blood for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV before it is released to hospitals. Diagnostic tests became available for Hepatitis B in 1972, for Hepatitis C in 1991 and for HIV in 1984. It is a matter for health professionals to ensure

that consent for testing is obtained. Guidance on consent to examination and treatment is available on the Department's web-site at www.doh.gov.uk/consent.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the *(a)* methodology and *(b)* effectiveness of screening for infections of (i) blood products and (ii) whole blood to be used by the NHS; and if he will make a statement; [145451]

(2) what assessment he has made of blood products from high infection risk groups being used in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [145458]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The National Blood Authority (NBA) and the Health Protection Agency have an infectious surveillance scheme that monitors the effectiveness of the blood screening programme and the methodology employed. The NBA also complies with the annually updated expert guidelines produced by the Council of Europe and with the requirements laid down in the European Union Directive 2002/98 on setting standards of quality and safety for the collection, testing, processing, storage and distribution of human blood and blood components.

The Government's Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transplantation provides expert advice to the UK Blood Transfusion Services on blood screening tests. The latest "Serious Hazards of Transfusion" report, published on 17 July 2003, indicated that the risks of transfusion transmitted infections in the United Kingdom are exceedingly small.

BSE

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the risk of vaccines sourced from bovine products in the USA being an agent for transmitting BSE. [146344]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency has initiated a risk assessment to assess any potential impact on United Kingdom licensed medicinal products, including vaccines, that are manufactured using bovine derived materials from the United States following the announcement of the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a cow in the USA.

Cancer Prevention

Ms Munn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action he is taking to improve cancer prevention in England; [145455]

(2) how much money his Department allocates to primary prevention of breast cancer; [145456]

(3) how much his Department spent on primary prevention of breast cancer in 2002–03. [145457]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department funds an extensive health improvement and prevention programme aimed chiefly at preventing cancer and coronary heart disease, which are the two main causes of mortality.

Health improvement and prevention work is also undertaken directly by primary care trusts (PCTs). From April 2003, 75 per cent. of the national health service budget has been devolved directly to PCTs allowing them control of the resources to deliver on both national and local priorities, including cancer.

Funding for programmes on tobacco control and smoking cessation, improving nutrition and diet and increasing levels of physical activity all contribute not only to cancer prevention, but also to preventing coronary heart disease. It is not possible to identify the amounts in these programmes that contribute solely to cancer prevention or to the prevention of any particular form of cancer.

Care Homes

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the Government provided towards the cost of care home places per person in *(a)* England, *(b)* the West Midlands and *(c)* Coventry in the last year for which figures are available. [144385]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* The Government do not directly allocate funds to local authorities towards the cost of care home places. Rather it provides general funding, distributed by the formula spending share, and revenue grants and capital resources for specific purposes. Personal social services funding for 2004–05 was set out in the Local Authority Social Services Letter LASSL(2003)8 of 19 November 2003. The LASSL can be accessed at: http://www.doh.gov.uk/publications/coinh.html

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing and care home places meet statutory requirements for people over 65 with sensory impairment, broken down by local authority. [146733]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is not available by local authority. Information broken down by National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) area office is shown in the table. In applying the standards through registration, the NCSC seeks evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement, quality services, support, accommodation and facilities which will assure a good quality of life and health for service users.

At 1 October 2003, the latest date for which information is available, there were a total number of 182 care homes registered for sensory impairment for elderly people. These homes provided a total number of 1,582 places.

Breakdown by NCSC area office

Area office	*No of services*	*No of places*
South Shields	32	116
Leicester	41	400
Lincoln	1	1
Somerset	1	0
Gloucester	3	15
St. Austell	2	10
Avon	1	22
Exeter	2	22
South Devon	3	88
Worcester	2	34
Coventry	1	13
Birmingham	2	98
Halesowen	1	1

Breakdown by NCSC area office

Area office	*No of services*	*No of places*
Ashton Under Lyne	36	120
Manchester	2	0
Bolton	2	3
North Lanes	1	38
Penrith	1	36
South West London	2	44
Harrow	1	0
Southampton	3	90
Oxford	1	2
Purrey	29	179
Eastbourne	1	44
Worthing	1	2
Hertfordshire	2	57
Cambridge	2	5
North Essex	2	60
South Essex	1	25
Hessle	1	21
Leeds	1	6
Sheffield	1	30
Total	182	1,582

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Government's strategy for ensuring that there are sufficient care and nursing home places which meet statutory requirements for people over 65 with sensory impairment to satisfy demand. [146734]

Dr. Ladyman: The Government has made available substantial increases in the level of funding provided for social services in recent years. Between 1996–97 and 2002–03, the overall level of funding has increased by 20 per cent., an average real terms annual increase of around three per cent. We intend to increase further resources to social services for personal social services by an annual average of six per cent, in real terms from 2003–04 to 2005–06.

It is for local councils to use these extra resources to ensure that the right amount and range of care is made available, taking account of local circumstances and priorities.

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many publicly-funded care home places there were in Huntingdon in each year since 1999. [146449]

Dr. Ladyman: The table shows the number of local authority (LA) staffed care home places in Cambridgeshire, as at 31 March, for the years 1999 to 2001.

Figures for later years have been collected by the National Care Standards Commission, but comparable details broken down by LA are not available.

Information on the number of care homes places in Huntingdon is not available.

Number of local authority staffed care home places in Cambridgeshire: 31 March 1999 to 2001

Rounded numbers

	Number of places
1999	690
2000	610
2001	550

Source:
RA

Children's Nurses

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many community and outreach children's nurses were registered in 2002–03 in England; [145665]

(2) how many paediatric *(a)* oncology and *(b)* intensive care nurses were registered in 2002–03 in (i) England and (ii) Wales; [145693]

(3) how many special baby care and neonatal intensive care nurses were registered in 2002–03 in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales. [145694]

Mr. Hutton: The information is not collected centrally.

Information for Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly.

Communicable Diseases

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, (1) if he will list for each *(a)* strategic health authority and *(b)* primary care trust the number of consultants in communicable diseases in each year since 1996; [144789]

(2) if he will list for each *(a)* strategic health authority and *(b)* primary care trust the three month vacancy figures for consultants in communicable diseases in each year since 1996. [144790]

Mr. Hutton: The number of consultants in communicable diseases, or communicable disease control (CDC) is not collected by the Department.

The main specialties under which CDC falls are public health medicine and microbiology and virology.

Information relating to the number of consultants in public health medicine and microbiology and virology in each strategic health authority and primary care trust since 1996 has been placed in the Library.

Vacancy data has only been collected by the Department since 1999. Between 1999 and 2001, only a limited number of specialties were collected. 2002 is the first year when a significant number of key specialties were individually collected. Available data has been placed in the Library.

Compensation

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much compensation was paid to patients and relatives by the NHS *(a)* in Cambridgeshire and *(b)* in England in each year since 1990. [146438]

Ms Rosie Winterton: This information is not collected centrally.

Debt

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money is owed within the NHS; by whom; and to whom it is owed. [144945]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested will be placed in the Library.

Departmental Information Campaigns

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on information campaigns and advertising in 2002–03. [145286]

Ms Rosie Winterton: In 2002–03, £34.89 million was spent on information campaigns and advertising commissioned by the Department's communications directorate.

Doctors' Practice (South Ockenden)

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will investigate the circumstances relating to the decision of Doctors Leighton, Williams, Khraishi and Ghannam to close their branch surgery in South Road, South Ockendon, Essex; and if he will make a statement on the ability of the Thurrock Primary Care Trust to facilitate a relocation of patients to other doctors within the time frame dictated by the doctors' decision to close their branch practice; [146556]

(2) if he will investigate the circumstances relating to the decision of Doctors Leighton, Williams, Khraishi and Ghannam to close their branch surgery in South Road, South Ockendon, Essex in relation to the period of notice given to individual patients to find alternative GP practices; [146558]

(3) if he will investigate the circumstances relating to the decision of Doctors Leighton, Williams, Khraishi and Ghannam to close their branch surgery in South Road, South Ockendon, Essex in relation to the method of selecting patients no longer to be served by the practice. [146559]

Dr. Ladyman: I have no plans to investigate the circumstances relating to the decision of Doctors Leighton, Williams, Khraishi and Ghannam to close their branch surgery in South Road, South Ockendon, Essex.

The Government's policy of 'Shifting the Balance of Power' means that the configuration of local services is a matter for the local national health service, working in partnership with its local community.

I am informed by Essex Strategic Health Authority that Doctor Leighton and Partners advised 180 patients during mid December 2003 that they intended to close the South Road Branch Surgery in South Ockendon, during February 2004, and invited those 180 patients to find another general practitioner (GP) by 19 January 2004. This complies with the requirement outlined in the regulations for the practice to give 30 days notice of their intention to remove any patients from their list.

I am also advised that Thurrock Primary Care Trust is making every effort to ensure that the displaced patients find another GP by 19 January 2004.

The patients that Thurrock PCT has selected for relocation to alternative GP practices, are those who live the furthest distance from the main surgery in Aveley. These patients are located at the far north of the South Ockendon area and north of the branch surgery in South Road. The period of notice given to individual patients was given in writing by the PCT in a letter dated 28 December 2003.

I am advised via Essex SHA that Thurrock PCT has worked with both this practice and the local medical committee to consider possible alternatives in order to avoid the closure of the branch surgery. Thurrock PCT wrote to the patients on 28 December 2003 advising them of the impending closure of the branch surgery which detailed information and advice on the support available to them in registering with a new practice.

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what national guidelines or constraints apply to general practitioners in relation to the ratio of doctors to patients; whether these were exceeded by the practice of Doctors Leighton, Williams, Khraishi and Ghannam prior to their decision to close their branch surgery in South Road, South Ockendon, Essex; and if he will list those alternative general practitioners within the vicinity who have vacancies on their patients' list, stating in each case the number of new patients he or she is permitted to admit to his or her list. [146628]

Dr. Ladyman: According to Regulation 24(2) of the NHS (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992, the maximum number of persons on a doctor's list shall be:

(a) 3,500, for a doctor carrying on practice otherwise than as an assistant or in a partnership;

(b) 4,500 for a doctor carrying on practice in partnership, subject to a maximum average of 3,500 for each of the partners in the practice,

and, where the doctor employs an assistant, such further number not exceeding 2,000 for each assistant as the primary care trust, or, on appeal, the Secretary of State, may decide in the light of the circumstances of the practice and the amount of time given to it by any assistant.

The new general medical services (GMS) contract will mean that patients will register with a practice rather than with an individual practitioner. In order that practices are not constrained in terms of growth, the list maxima currently applied under regulation 24 of the 1992 Regulations will no longer be continued under the new statutory provisions implementing the new GMS contract.

The information relating to alternative general practices with vacancies in the immediate vicinity is not held centrally.

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients the general practice of Doctors Leighton, Williams, Khraishi and Ghannam had in November 2003; and how many it is proposed they will have in February 2004 following the planned closure of their branch surgery. [146629]

Dr. Ladyman: This information is not held centrally.

However, my hon. Friend may wish to contact the Chairman of Thurrock Primary Care Trust to request this information.

Drug Treatment

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people aged 15 to 24 started drug treatment episodes in each year since 1990, broken down by socio-economic group in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region. [146340]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Information on the number of drug users in the 15 to 24 year old age group presenting for drug treatment in England and by region is available in the Library and on the Department's web-site as detailed below. Information on the socio-economic group of clients starting drug treatment is not collected centrally.

National figures, from drug misuse agencies and general practitioners in England, for each six month period from 1993 to 2001 were published in the Department's Statistical Bulletin series, Drug Misuse Statistics 1993 to 1997 and Statistics from the Regional Drug Misuse Databases 1998 to 2001. These are available at http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/work_public_health.htm#sdd

Elder Abuse

Ann Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that *(a)* nursing and *(b)* auxiliary staff are adequately trained to identify and deal with elder abuse in (i) the home and (ii) nursing and residential care. [146318]

Dr. Ladyman: The Government is fully committed to ensuring the provision of an adequately trained workforce to provide care for all vulnerable adults in social care settings, including care homes with nursing on the premises. The Department's No Secrets guidance has required all local councils and partner agencies to establish effective multi-agency codes of practice to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. A key element of this guidance concerns the training of staff. The guidance states that agencies should provide training for staff and volunteers on the policy, procedures and professional practices that are in the place locally, commensurate with their responsibilities in the adult protection process.

In addition, the Department's National Minimum Standards for care homes and domiciliary care, used by the National Care Standards Commission to regulate social care for older people and other vulnerable adults has a number of requirements concerning abuse. These include, protecting service users from abuse, ensuring adequate staff training, and the employment of staff in accordance with the code of practice set by the General Social Care Council, which includes advice to challenge and report and behaviour or practice that could lead to abuse.

Finally, all registered nurses are bound by the Nursing and Midwifery Council's code of professional conduct, which makes explicit the responsibility of registered nurses in ensuring that they protect the public through professional standards.

Emergency Readmissions

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made towards achieving the national priorities guidance performance target to reduce the per capita rate of growth in emergency readmissions of people aged 75 years or over; and for what reasons the data collection for emergency admissions was changed to an all age base from 2003–04. [146208]

Dr. Ladyman: The performance target for the rate of emergency readmissions within 28 days of discharge for patients of all ages as set out in the priorities and planning framework for 2003–06, "Improvement, Expansion and Reform", is that there will be no growth. The rate at Quarter 4, 2002–03 was [illegible] per cent. The latest information available is the Quarter 2, 2003–04 figure, which shows no growth.

The target, and subsequently the collection of monitoring information on emergency readmissions, was changed from that relating only to patients aged 75 because it was perceived as being ageist in that older people could be denied access to hospital services in order to meet a performance target. Emergency readmissions targets and data collections have, therefore, covered all ages since 2002.

Fluoridation

Mr. Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what progress his Department has made in its consideration of the indemnification of water supply companies against claims arising from fluoridation; [146011]

(2) whether his Department will provide equal funding for the presentation of both sides in the event of a local referendum on water fluoridation; [146012]

(3) what guidance his Department has given to strategic health authorities on evaluating public opinion on fluoridation of the water supply. [146013]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Section 58 of the Water Act 2003 provides for regulations to be made on both the process which strategic health authorities are to follow in order to consult and ascertain opinion on proposals to fluoridate their water supplies and the indemnities to be made available to water undertakers in respect of any liabilities which they may incur in fluoridating water. We plan to make these regulations, which are subject to affirmative resolution, during 2004. Subject to their approval, we will issue guidance to strategic health authorities on their implementation including standards for consultations which ensure that the views of both proponents and opponents of fluoridation are expressed and taken into account.

Foundation Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to approve the governance arrangements of the first wave of foundation hospitals. [145194]

Mr. Hutton: The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 provides for national health service trusts to submit their applications for NHS foundation trust status to the Independent Regulator. The Independent Regulator must be satisfied that the applicant's constitution is in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Health and Social Care Act 2003 before granting an authorisation.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance his Department will offer foundation hospitals in developing *(a)* ethical and *(b)* environmental, (i) investment, (ii) banking and (iii) procurement policies. [145716]

Mr. Hutton: National Health Service foundation trusts will develop their own investment, banking and procurement policies, subject to any conditions set by the Independent Regulator in their terms of authorisation. NHS foundation trusts will not be subject to directions from the Department, but they will be able to continue to access guidance and best practice developed or disseminated by the Department and its agencies, including NHS Estates and the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been given to trusts seeking foundation status on *(a)* building up an active membership and *(b)* demonstrating their understanding of mutual organisations. [146546]

Mr. Hutton: Department of Health officials are working with the first wave of applicants for national health service foundation trust status on membership issues, which includes holding regular meetings with the trusts. The advice given at the meetings includes significant input from the mutual sector both on building an active membership and developing a better understanding of the mutual sector. This is supported by a comprehensive source book, "NHS Foundation Trusts—A guide to the governance arrangements", which was developed with advice from a group of external experts on governance.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is issued to NHS Trusts on the disposal of NHS assets; and what changes are proposed as a result of foundation status being achieved. [146547]

Mr. Hutton: Guidance on the disposal of surplus national health service property assets is contained in the Department's "Estatecode", a copy of which is available in the Library. Guidance on the accounting treatment for disposals of assets is contained in the NHS "Capital Accounting Manual", which is publicly available on the Department's web-site at www.doh.gov.uk.

Section 16 of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 prevents NHS foundation trusts from disposing of NHS property designated as protected without the approval of the Independent Regulator. The Independent Regulator will be issuing guidance on this to NHS foundation trusts.

General Practitioners

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which primary care trusts have indicated that they will not be able to assure out-of-hours cover for general practitioners in *(a)* April 2004 and *(b)* August 2004. [143188]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* None. From April 2004, general practices will be able to opt out of out-of-hours services with the agreement of their primary care trust (PCT). PCTs will not agree to opt-outs unless they have put in place proper alternative arrangements. Opting out will become a right in all but exceptional circumstances from January 2005.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners have indicated that they intend to opt out of 24-hour cover, broken down by *(a)* rural practices, *(b)* urban practices and *(c)* strategic health authority. [143189]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* Primary care trusts are working with their local practices to establish the position, but full information is not available. We expect, however, that the majority of general practitioners will choose to opt-out of responsibility for providing services overnight and at weekends.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* general practitioners' surgeries and *(b)* single-handed general practitioners' surgeries there were in each of the last five years for which figures are available in (i) England, (ii) each region and (iii) each strategic health authority. [144318]

Mr. Hutton: Data on the number of general practitioner partnerships, including single-handed practitioners is published annually and is available at http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/stats1.htm. The information requested is shown in the table. The total number of partnerships fell during the period 1998 to 2003 however there has been a steady trend towards larger partnerships and more general practitioners working in the national health service than ever before.

Single-handed unrestricted principals and equivalents (UPEs) [1] *by strategic health authority*

England — *Numbers (headcount)*

	1998		*1999*		*2000*	
	UPE partnerships	*of which: single-handed*	*UPE partnerships*	*of which: single-handed*	*UPE partnerships*	*of which: single-handed*
England total	8,994	2,683	8,944	2,631	8,878	2,485
Number of UPEs	27,392		27,591		27,704	
North	2,708	812	2,697	803	2,679	796
Northumberland, Tyne & Wear	243	56	239	54	238	52
Country Durham & Tees Valley	176	50	171	41	166	37
North & East Yorkshire & Northern Lincolnshire	273	70	268	69	263	69
West Yorkshire	378	110	382	114	377	110
Cumbria & Lancashire	386	128	385	127	379	125
Greater Manchester	581	219	577	210	579	213
Cheshire & Merseyside	438	117	442	122	445	125
South Yorkshire	233	62	233	66	232	65

Single-handed unrestricted principals and equivalents (UPEs)[1] by strategic health authority

England *Numbers (headcount)*

	1998		1999		2000	
	UPE partners hips	*of which: single-handed*	*UPE partners hips*	*of which: single-handed*	*UPE partners hips*	*of which: single-handed*
Midlands & Eastern	2,547	726	2,531	716	2,521	706
Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire	307	40	305	36	307	38
Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire	238	57	231	47	233	52
Essex	285	96	285	100	288	105
Trent	429	98	430	100	427	93
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire & Rutland	240	62	232	61	225	56
Shropshire & Staffordshire	266	89	272	95	270	97
Birmingham & the Black Country	542	240	540	237	535	226
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire	240	44	236	40	236	39
London	1,736	754	1,711	735	1,691	717
North West London	469	217	464	209	458	209
North Central London	312	147	304	140	305	137
North East London	385	186	380	182	378	178
South East London	311	121	308	122	302	112
South West London	259	83	255	82	248	77
South	2,003	391	2,005	377	1,987	356
Thames Valley	299	52	304	50	300	47
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	241	28	241	28	240	26
Kent & Medway	324	139	314	126	306	113
Surrey & Sussex	379	74	379	75	375	71
Avon, Gloucestershire & Wiltshire	322	43	326	42	325	44
South West Peninsula	254	28	254	29	254	28
Dorset & Somerset	184	27	187	27	187	27

	2001		2002		June 2003	
	UPE partners hips	*of which: single-handed*	*UPE partners hips*	*of which: single-handed*	*UPE partners hips*	*of which: single-handed*
England total	8,817	2,534	8,748	2,482	8,750	2,485
Number of UPEs	27,843		28,031		28,384	
North	2,653	769	2,632	760	2,635	750
Northumberland, Tyne & Wear	237	48	235	43	235	45
Country Durham & Tees Valley	167	34	168	36	176	40
North & East Yorkshire & Northern Lincolnshire	265	70	266	74	265	67
West Yorkshire	378	108	375	99	378	101
Cumbria & Lancashire	375	122	368	117	365	117
Greater Manchester	562	201	555	202	553	196
Cheshire & Merseyside	440	127	439	127	437	123
South Yorkshire	229	59	226	62	226	61
Midlands & Eastern	2,506	709	2,478	698	2,477	707
Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire	309	44	301	37	304	38
Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire	230	53	229	51	230	51
Essex	278	95	274	92	269	96
Trent	426	91	424	94	420	88
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire & Rutland	226	53	223	48	226	54
Shropshire & Staffordshire	271	104	267	100	271	106
Birmingham & the Black Country	534	234	529	237	528	235
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire	232	35	231	39	229	39
London	1,691	717	1,675	701	1,698	717
North West London	459	200	448	191	463	202
North Central London	306	137	310	142	320	157
North East London	380	192	378	191	372	182
South East London	304	114	297	109	305	117
South West London	242	74	242	68	238	59
South	1,967	339	1,963	323	1,940	311
Thames Valley	296	39	297	41	297	40
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	238	25	240	24	235	27
Kent & Medway	305	115	299	110	289	100
Surrey & Sussex	367	69	367	60	366	61
Avon, Gloucestershire & Wiltshire	324	42	323	38	325	39
South West Peninsula	252	27	252	28	250	27
Dorset & Somerset	185	22	185	22	178	17

[1] UPEs include QMS Unrestricted Principals, PMS Contracted GPs and PMS Salaried GPs.

Note:
Data as at 1 October 1998–99, 30 September 2000–02 and 30 June 2003
'Single-handed' means an UPE who is not in partnership with another UPE although many so called 'single-handers' work with another GP qualified doctor.

Source:
Department of Health General and Personal Medical Services Statistics

Head Lice

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the national professional guidance on head louse control (the Stafford Report) and the subsequent guidelines based on the guidance and published in the Journal of Family Healthcare. [144161]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* Professional guidance on head louse control recognises that detection combing is of paramount importance, as is the use of appropriate treatment options. This can involve either lotions or combing regimes. Our view is that parents should be able to make an informed choice with advice on both options being available from primary health care teams.

Health Professionals (Training)

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that training programmes for health professionals include components which encourage the development of skills specific to working with men. [145524]

Mr. Hutton: The Department is not responsible for setting curricula for health professional training; that is rightly the responsibility of the statutory and professional bodies. However, we do share a commitment with those bodies that all health professionals are trained so that they have the skills and knowledge to deliver a high quality health service to all groups of the population with whom they deal.

Health Tourism (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates he has made of the cost to the NHS in Cambridgeshire of health tourism in 2002–03. [146452]

Dr. Ladyman: Entitlement to free national health service treatment is based on residence in the United Kingdom. The National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989 place a duty on NHS trusts to establish whether a patient is ordinarily resident or otherwise eligible for free NHS hospital treatment and if not to levy a charge for any treatment provided.

The amounts collected from NHS charged patients are not separately identified in trust accounts and are not collected centrally.

Hospitals (West London)

Mr. Portillo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the extent to which primary care trust resources are adequate to cover the cost of capital programmes at the *(a)* Ealing, *(b)* Charing Cross, *(c)* Hillingdon, *(d)* Northwick Park and *(e)* Paddington hospital sites, while meeting growth in demand for services; [145096]

(2) what assessment he has made of whether redevelopment at the *(a)* Charing Cross and *(b)* Chelsea and Westminster hospitals would represent a viable alternative to redevelopment at Paddington. [145098]

Mr. Hutton: The outline business case (OBC) for the Paddington Health Campus scheme which was approved in October 2000 is currently being reviewed. This review will determine if the financial assumptions underpinning the OBC are still robust. The review will include the views of local primary care trusts.

Influenza

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking this winter to respond to the risk of an increase in influenza cases. [141319]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 2 December 2003]:* All strategic health authorities have developed stringent winter plans to cope with increased seasonal demand for health services, such as that caused by the flu season. These set out escalation procedures, which are activated in the event of increased pressure on the national health service.

In addition, a daily winter reporting system has been instigated so that the Department of Health is aware of any Trusts experiencing winter pressures. If pressures are identified, the Department of Health works with the responsible strategic health authority in developing a solution, such as the introduction of improved working practices or the opening of additional beds.

Influenza Vaccine

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each health authority *(a)* the number of people eligible for the influenza vaccine and *(b)* the number of shots of vaccine available during winter 2003–04 and *(c)* whether the health authority has reported a shortage in supply. [145624]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The number of people aged 65 and over by strategic health authority is shown in the table. This year, there are nearly 12.4 million doses of vaccine available. No strategic health authority has reported a shortage of flu vaccine.

Strategic health authority	*Population aged over 65*
Cheshire and Merseyside	382,894
County Durham and Tees Valley	182,924
Cumbria and Lancashire	321,415
Greater Manchester	375,607
North and East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire	283,378
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	233,567
South Yorkshire	205,232
West Yorkshire	313,728

Strategic health authority	Population aged over 65
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	237,754
Birmingham and the Black Country	360,054
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire	251,755
Essex	268,299
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland	221,145
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	388,676
Shropshire and Staffordshire	235,813
Trent	444,755
North Central London	145,780
North East London	181,018
North West London	214,823
South East London	189,867
South West London	161,786
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	357,190
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	293,145
Kent and Medway	263,637
Somerset and Dorset	248,767
South West Peninsula	316,441
Surrey and Sussex	478,280
Thames Valley	290,607

Key Worker Housing

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much land his Department is proposing that the Government should buy for key worker houses. [144943]

Mr. Hutton: Accommodation for national health service key workers is being planned with Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and is normally sourced through other agencies. Therefore, the Department has no plans to purchase any land for this purpose.

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many adults with learning disabilities there were in the UK in *(a)* 1997 and *(b)* 2003; and how many of these were aged 60 or over. [146679]

Dr. Ladyman: Data on the number of adults with learning disabilities in England are not centrally available.

The learning disability white paper, "Valuing People (1999)", estimated that there are about 210,000 people with severe and profound learning disabilities in England. Of these, around 65,000 are children and young people, 120,000 are adults of working age and 25,000 are older people. In the case of people with mild/moderate learning disabilities, lower estimates suggest a prevalence rate of around 25 per 1,000 population—some 1.2 million people in England.

Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for the Devolved Administrations.

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much earmarked funding has been provided to local authorities for a *(a)* older people's services and *(b)* adults with learning disabilities in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [146731]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department does not earmark any funds to local authorities specifically for older people or learning disability services. Local authorities decide how much to make available for services to older people and those with learning disabilities from the overall amount provided for adult personal social services by the Department.

Life Resources Inc.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the screening arrangements *(a)* taken and *(b)* required by Life Resources Inc. in respect of deferring donors who have travelled to live for five years or more in the UK or Europe between 1980 and 1996. [146343]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The United States does not accept blood donations from people who have visited or lived in the United Kingdom or Europe for six months or more between 1980 and 1996.

Long Term Conditions

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of people reported a longstanding illness or disability *(a)* in England, *(b)* in each region and *(c)* broken down by socio-economic group in each year since 1990. [146339]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from John Pullinger to Mr. Burstow dated 12 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the prevalence of people reporting a longstanding illness or disability in England, each region and each socio-economic group since 1990. I am replying in his absence.

The General Household Survey (GHS), carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), publishes the prevalence of longstanding illness, disability or infirmity. The latest available estimates are for the 2001 survey. The tables, which have been placed in the Library, show the prevalence of longstanding illness for:

(a) England, 1990 to 2001;

(b) Region—standard region, 1994 to 1996 and Government Office Region, 1998 to 2001; Unfortunately, regional analyses for 1990 to 1993 are not readily available. Prior to 1994, regional analyses would be based on health regions and thus not directly comparable with later years.

(c) Socio-economic status,

socio-economic group by individual, 1990 to 1991

socio-economic group by head of household, 1992 to 1998

socio-economic group by household reference person, 2000

National Statistics socio-economic classification by household reference person, 2001.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the GHS are subject to sampling variability.

Maternity Services

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he will make to the Fourth, Eighth and Ninth reports of the Health Select Committee on maternity services in session 2002–03. [143413]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 11 December 2003]*: A response will be made shortly taking into account the document Building on the Best-Choice, Responsiveness and Equity in the NHS, which was launched on 9 December 2003.

Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the objectives of the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency are in relation to *(a)* the development of the pharmaceutical industry and *(b)* the protection of public health; how performance against these objectives is evaluated; and how any conflict between the objectives is overcome. [145364]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The primary goal of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is the protection of public health through the regulation of medicines and medical devices.

Its aims and objectives are set out in its business plan, which is available in the Library. There are no specific objectives relating to the development of the pharmaceutical industry. The business plan does, however, contain measures of the efficiency of its performance of services for the pharmaceutical industry.

Performance is evaluated internally and reported quarterly to the Secretary of State for Health. The MHRA is subject regularly to internal audit and to external audit by the National Audit Office.

Mental Health

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions his Department has had with the Department for International Development regarding the rights of people suffering from mental health problems in the developing world. [144841]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 18 December 2003]*: The Department of Health provides funding for the World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborating centre at the Institute for Psychiatry to work closely with the Department for International Development and a number of governments of low and middle income countries.

In addition, the United Kingdom national counterpart for mental health to the WHO, based at the National Institute for Mental Health in England, has been involved in the WHO global fellowship programme which aims to train senior policy makers in developing countries in mental health policy and service development and implementation.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the risk of developing a mental illness, broken down by *(a)* region and *(b)* socio-economic status. [146335]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Information is available from independent longitudinal research about the relationship between risk factors and the likelihood of an individual within the population developing a mental illness.

The Department of Health does not assess this directly. However, the Office for National Statistics (www.statistics.gov.uk) collects information on a systematic basis about current correlates of mental illness, including age, gender, socio-economic status, physical health and other factors, and estimates mental illness prevalence rates.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on *(a)* the findings of the national survey of ethnic minority psychiatric illness rates in the community and *(b)* the action he will take as a result. [144812]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The national survey of ethnic minority psychiatric illness rates in the community (EMPIRIC study) was a major survey of psychiatric illness rates in the community amongst ethnic minority adults aged 16–74 living in England. The survey was used to make comparisons with the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity in the general population. The findings were released in May 2002.

The results of this survey allow, for the first time, detailed analysis of the mental health of ethnic minority groups and comparisons with a general white population. It contains data on common mental disorders, psychosis, social functioning, physical health, use of services and social support. The report identifies different rates of common mental disorders and psychotic illness between minority ethnic groups.

In order to combat the inequality experience by black and minority ethnic mental health service users, "Delivering Race Equality: Guidance for Services" was launched on 17 October for consultation. This marks the start of a major programme by the National Institute for Mental Health in England on black and minority ethnic mental health.

Microbiologists

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons five of the posts for regional microbiologists formerly filled by group directors of the Public Health Laboratory Service are vacant. [145039]

Miss Melanie Johnson: There are nine regional microbiologist posts in the Health Protection Agency (HPA). Four of these have been filled by former Public Health Laboratory Service group laboratory directors, following internal advertisement, applying procedures in accordance with the change management protocol which was agreed when the HPA was created. The remaining five positions were subsequently advertised externally and the process for assessing and interviewing candidates is underway.

Mid-Essex Hospital Trust

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the latest available figures are for the total number of people waiting for in-patient treatment in the Mid Essex Hospital Trust area. [143752]

Dr. Ladyman *[holding answer 16 December 2003]:* I am advised that, as of 13 October 2003, there were 8,040 patients waiting for elective admission at Mid Essex Hospital Trust.

Source:
Department of Health monthly monitoring reports.

Mifegyne

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investigations the *(a)* Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency and *(b)* the Committee on the Safety of Medicines have conducted into the two suspected fatal reactions associated with the use of Mifegyne; and with what results. [146479]

Miss Melanie Johnson: As with all marketed medicines, the safety of Mifegyne (mifepristone, an antiprogestogenic steroid that is used for the medical termination of intra-uterine pregnancy) is continuously monitored by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The MHRA has carefully evaluated the two reports received via the Yellow Card Scheme of fatal suspected adverse reactions associated with the use of Mifegyne. This assessment has included details from the post-mortems received in the initial report or via follow-up information obtained from the marketing authorisation holder. The MHRA has concluded that the two cases did not require alteration of the advice to health professionals in the summary of product characteristics and did not affect the balance of risks and benefits of mifepristone. The Committee on Safety of Medicines was not asked to consider these cases.

The reporting of a suspected adverse drug reaction does not necessarily mean that the drug was responsible. Many factors, such as the medical condition that is being treated, other pre-existing illnesses or other medications might have contributed. In one of the cases, the fatal suspected reaction that was reported is recognised to occur with greater frequency during pregnancy or surgery, irrespective of the use of mifepristone.

MRSA

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports of MRSA there were in *(a)* England, *(b)* each region and *(c)* each strategic health authority in each of the last six years. [140859]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 3 December 2003]:* The national mandatory surveillance system for methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) blood stream infections (bacteraemias), started in April 2001 and the available data are shown in the tables.

Department of Health mandatory bacteraemia surveillance scheme—MRSA bacteraemia by region—Acute NHS trusts

Regions	*Total Number*	*S.aureus bacteraemia April 01 to March 02 Methicillin resistant*	*Percentage*	*Total number*	*S.aureus bacteraemia April 02 to March 03 Methicillin resistant*	*Percentage*	*Percentage difference MRSA between the two years*
North East	931	363	39.0	953	380	39.9	4.5
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,028	714	35.2	2,086	664	31.8	-7.5
East Midlands	1,374	543	39.5	1,349	494	36.6	-9.9
Eastern	1,683	754	45.0	1,653	714	43.1	-5.6
London	3,524	1,571	44.6	3,739	1,659	44.4	5.3
South East	2,205	1,012	45.9	2,417	989	40.9	0.8
South West	1,745	696	39.9	1,756	738	42.0	5.7
West Midlands	1,863	761	40.8	1,908	812	42.6	6.3
North West	2,580	867	33.6	2,658	934	35.1	7.2
England	17,933	7,281	40.6	18,519	7,384	39.8	1.8

Provisional data

Strategic health authority	[1] *Total MRSA*	[2] *Total MRSA*
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	386	389
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	192	173
Birmingham and the Black Country	452	455
Cheshire and Merseyside	286	344
County Durham and Tees Valley	171	155
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire	153	182
Cumbria and Lancashire	236	215
Dorset and Somerset	74	139
Essex	194	149
Greater Manchester	345	375
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	209	200
Kent and Medway	222	205
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland	203	189
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	368	392
North and East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire	213	151

Provisional data

Strategic health authority	[1] *Total MRSA*	[2] *Total MRSA*
North central London	359	376
North east London	238	246
North west London	362	387
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	192	225
Shropshire and Staffordshire	156	170
South east London	345	406
South west London	267	244
South west Peninsula	236	210
South Yorkshire	141	156
Surrey and Sussex	360	341
Thames Valley	221	243
Trent	340	305
West Yorkshire	360	357

[1] April 2001 to March 2002

[2] April 2002 to March 2003

NHS Graduates

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many NHS graduates had their university fees reimbursed by their employers in the last year for which figures are available. [144280]

Mr. Hutton: In respect of National Health Service funded pre-registration Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health profession courses, no top-up fees are charged to students. These students have their contribution to tuition fees met through workforce development confederation contracts with higher education institutions. Fourth and fifth year undergraduate medical students and second, third and fourth year graduate entry medical students are entitled to claim back their top-up fees from the NHS student grant unit. Students benefiting from these arrangements are shown in the table.

The multi-professional education and training budget supports post-registration training for NHS professionals, including paying university fees. NHS trusts may also support postgraduate and post-registration study. Information on the number of NHS employees who have their fees paid in this way is not available centrally.

	£000
Nursing and Midwifery	65,000
Allied Health Professions	17,400
Healthcare Scientists	3,200
Medical Students	4,900

NHS Professionals

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health trusts have declined to use NHS professionals. [145667]

Mr. Hutton: This information is not held centrally.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much NHS Professionals charges hospital trusts for their services; [145669]

(2) in what circumstances NHS Professionals may charge an administrative fee to hospital trusts; [145672]

(3) what charges NHS Professionals make to trusts when they act as an intermediary between commercial agencies and trusts; [145670]

(4) what categories of charges are included in NHS Professionals administration charges. [145936]

Mr. Hutton: The NHS Professionals Special Health Authority was formally established on 1 January 2004. Decisions on these matters will in future be made by the authority.

Prior to the establishment of the special health authority, a range of different NHS Professionals services have been provided throughout England. Department of Health guidance issued in 2001, NHS Professionals—A co-ordinated, NHS-led approach to temporary staffing, a copy of which is in the Library, recommended a management fee of 7.5 per cent. The Oxford area NHS Professionals service also made a 3 per cent. administration charge to trusts when acting as an intermediary with private recruitment agencies. No other categories of charge have been made.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been charged by NHS professionals in administrative fees since it was set up. [145671]

Mr. Hutton: This information is not held centrally.

NHS Property Sales

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his latest estimate is of the value of properties to be sold as part of the Inventures/NHS Estates surplus property sale; and when he will make a statement about progress of the sale. [145007]

Mr. Hutton: The value of the properties is commercially confidential. A statement on progress will be made in early 2004.

NHS Trust (Chief Executive Misconduct)

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what duties are placed on a strategic health authority in circumstances where an authority is notified of a possible case of misconduct by the chief executive of an NHS trust. [146622]

Miss Melanie Johnson: It is ultimately only the employer which can take action with regard to its employees. The code of conduct for national health service managers states that where there has been an alleged breach of the code, it is for a local employer to decide whether to investigate the matter informally or under the terms of local disciplinary action. In the majority of cases the authority with which the contract lies will carry out investigations of alleged breaches of the code.

There are therefore no specific duties placed on a strategic health authority in circumstances where an authority is notified of a possible case of misconduct by the chief executive of an NHS trust. If a case of this kind did occur, strategic health authorities and other bodies can offer advice.

Obesity

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many finished consultant episodes there were where obesity was the primary diagnosis in *(a)* each NHS region and *(b)* England in 2002–03. [146216]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The table shows the count of finished consultant episodes by region in national health service hospitals for 2002–03 where obesity is the primary diagnosis.

Region of treatment	*Total episodes*
Northern and Yorkshire	348
Trent	164
West Midlands	102
North West	241
Eastern	56
London	258

Region of treatment	*Total episodes*
South East	156
South West	95
Not known	22
Total for England	1,442

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), Department of Health.

Orthodontic Treatment

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in *(a)* England and *(b)* Mid-Essex are waiting for orthodontic treatment; and how many have been waiting for treatment for (i) up to six months, (ii) up to 12 months, (iii) up to 24 months, (iv) up to 36 months and (v) over 36 months. [144860]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 5 January 2003]*: Information on waiting times for orthodontic treatment in the general dental services (GDS) is not available.

In terms of hospital treatment, in England at 30 September 2003 there were 228 patients waiting for elective inpatient admission for treatment by a consultant in the speciality of orthodontics. Of these 205 were waiting up to six months, and a further 23 were waiting over six months. No patients were waiting over 12 months. Mid-Essex Hospital Services National Health Service Trust had no patients waiting for the orthodontics speciality on the same date.

The NHS Plan (July 2000) sets out how waiting times will fall year on year. Maximum waiting times have already been reduced to 21 weeks for a first outpatient appointment and 12 months for inpatient treatment. However, the Government recognises that there is still some way to go.

Waiting times for hospital care will continue to fall, so that by the end of 2005, the maximum waiting time for a first outpatient appointment will be cut to 13 weeks and the maximum wait for inpatient treatment will be cut to six months.

In the twelve month period ending September 2003 GDS dentists in the Mid-Essex area claimed payment for 2,631 courses of treatment involving orthodontic appliances for children aged less than 18 years. This is equivalent to 27.5 claims per 1,000 population aged under 18, almost twice the England average of 14.5. The mid-Essex figure is for the area covered by the PCTs; Chelmsford; Maldon and South Chelmsford; Uttlesford; Witham, Braintree and Halstead.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* osteoporotic and *(b)* hip fractures were treated by the NHS in each of the last five years; and what the cost was in each year. [146575]

Dr. Ladyman: The table shows the counts of finished admission episodes for osteoporotic fractures and hip fractures treated by national health service hospitals in England from years 1998–99 to 2002–03.

	Primary Diagnosis	
	Osteoporosis with pathological fracture	*Fracture of Femur/ Fracture of Neck of Femur*
1998–99	3,489	43,041
1999–2000	3,361	43,983
2000–01	3,592	43,625
2001–02	3,321	42,367
2002–03	3,687	46,766

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), Department of Health, England.

The Department does not collect information centrally relating to costs.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms are in place to ensure that the targets related to osteoporosis in standard six of the national service framework for older people have been met. [146578]

Dr. Ladyman: Osteoporosis is a key component of an integrated falls service, which all health and social care systems are to have established by 2005. The 2005 milestone is set as a target in Improvement Expansion and Reform, the Priority and Planning Framework for 2003–06, and progress towards this target is being monitored centrally.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the link between osteoporosis and bed blocking. [145634]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department of Health does not collect data on the precise medical conditions of patients delayed in hospital, but it does have information on overall numbers of delays. Good progress has been made in reducing the number of delayed transfers of care from hospital year on year, with the number of acute patients delayed on any one day going down from around 6,000 in 2001, to 5,000 in 2002, to 4,000 in 2003. This reflects increased investment in services to tackle delays following the introduction of the Building Care Capacity Grant, and the introduction in October 2003 of new duties of communication between the National Health Service and councils required by the Community Care (Delayed Discharges, etc. Act). In January 2004 the Act requires local authorities to begin to reimburse the NHS for those delays for which they are solely responsible. This requirement will act as a further incentive to partners to identify and tackle the causes of delay in their local system.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of whether the identification of osteoporosis has become a priority in primary care as suggested in the National Service Framework for Older People. [145635]

Dr. Ladyman: Falls services, incorporating osteoporosis are covered in the national service framework (NSF) for older people. This, when set in the context of the national priorities guidance establishes it as a high priority for local action and delivery.

The NSF for older people sets clear milestones for the planning and development of integrated falls services and provides the basis for a service model that will deliver the improvements in prevention, care, treatment and rehabilitation that we all want to see.

The Priority and Planning Framework for 2003–2006 requires by April 2005, that an integrated falls service should be established across all health and social care systems. This target is an important driver for change and local service improvements. In line with "Shifting the Balance of Power" the priorities guidance set achievement and delivery of the NSF for older people milestones as a priority for local action.

The most recent reports we have from strategic health authorities indicate that all but a few of the primary care trust local delivery plans include actions to achieve the 2005 falls milestone. We have collected no systematic information on what local plans cover.

Paddington Site

Mr. Portillo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the estimated cost of the Paddington site development was on 1 January 2002; what his latest estimate of the cost of the development is; and if he will investigate alternative options for meeting tertiary health demand in West London. [145097]

Mr. Hutton: The estimated capital cost of the preferred option in the outline business case (OBC) which was approved in October 2000—the Paddington Basin scheme—was £360 million. The estimated cost of this option is currently £800 million.

This initial OBC is currently being reviewed. This review will determine if the financial assumptions underpinning the OBC are still robust.

Prisoners

Julie Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responsibility the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection has for *(a)* prisoners' and *(b)* ex-offenders' mental health care. [144522]

Ms Rosie Winterton: From April 2004, the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection will be responsible for conducting reviews and investigations of healthcare, including mental health services, provided by and for national health service bodies.

This responsibility will include the review or investigation of health services for prisoners where these are commissioned or provided by primary care trusts.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the equipment procured under the Private Finance Initiative in each year since 1998, broken down by *(a)* type, *(b)* hospital, *(c)* initial capital cost, *(d)* term of payment and *(e)* overall cost. [145586]

Mr. Hutton: Information is not held centrally for equipment procured under private finance initiative (PFI) contracts. To gain this information would mean contacting all national health service trusts with PFI schemes, thus incurring disproportionate costs.

Public Services

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to introduce independent scrutiny of all performance monitoring procedures, with particular reference to the star ratings system. [146337]

Mr. Hutton: The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) is the independent regulator of national health service performance and is responsible for developing indicators and publishing NHS performance ratings. Ministers will continue to agree key targets and the priority areas to be covered in the ratings, but are not responsible for their calculation and publication.

The Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection, which will take over responsibility for the ratings process from April 2004 and will publish the 2003–04 ratings this summer and develop future indicator sets, including the 2004–05 set.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2003, the Secretary of State for Health has responsibility for setting national standards. Future published standards will impact on performance monitoring arrangements.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Norman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients started radiotherapy within four weeks of diagnosis of *(a)* lung, *(b)* gynaecological, *(c)* breast, *(d)* colorectal and *(e)* urological cancers in each of the last three years. [145760]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Information on waiting times for radiotherapy is not collected centrally. The NHS Cancer Plan set out maximum waiting time targets for a patient's first definitive cancer treatment, which could include radiotherapy. From December 2001, there has been a one month maximum wait from diagnosis to first treatment for breast cancer. From 2002, there has been a maximum two month wait from urgent referral by a general practitioner for suspected cancer, to first treatment for breast cancer. By 2005, there will be a maximum two months from urgent referral by a GP to treatment commencing, and a maximum one-month wait from diagnosis to first treatment for all cancers.

Read the Signs Programme

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the evaluation of the Read the Signs anti-stigma programme. [144937]

Ms Rosie Winterton: A copy of the management summary of the research for the Read the Signs anti-stigma programme has been placed in the Library.

Recruitment Advertising

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on recruitment advertisements in the press, broken down by publication, by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* quangos under the Department and *(c)* non-departmental Government bodies under the Department (i) in the last year and (ii) since 1997. [145802]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Figures prior to the year 2002–03 are not available. The Department's non-departmental public bodies and quangos have devolved responsibility for their own recruitment. Figures and the publications used for recruitment advertisements can only be provided at disproportionate cost. A list of the Departments non-departmental public bodies can be found in the publication "Public Bodies 2003", copies of which are available in the Library.

Details of where advertisements are placed are not centrally recorded, and can be provided only at disproportionate cost. Where advertisements are placed will depend on the nature of the vacancies. The Department has a robust external recruitment policy, which complies with the rules and requirements of "Minister's Rules for Selection, The Civil Service Order in Council", Treasury and equal opportunity and employment protection legislation.

The information requested for the Department is shown in the table.

£

1 April-31 March	*Recruitment budget spend*
2003-to date	146,331.25
2002–03	345,229.15

Research and Development

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out for each year since 1996 the amount *(a)* budgeted for and *(b)* spent on research and development; what proportion of the departmental, including NHS, budget this represents; how much of the research and development budget has been (i) allocated and (ii) spent on public health; and what proportion of the research and development budget this represents. [145082]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The amounts initially allocated for each of the past six years and spent in each year from the combined budgets for the departmental policy research programme (PRP) and for national health service research and development are shown in the table.

£ million

	Initial allocation	*Expenditure*
1997–98	450	452
1998–99	453	446
1999–2000	464	466
2000–01	480	483
2001–02	510	510
2002–03	540	547

Note:
Policy research programme and NHS R&D combined budgets.

Research is also carried out by some of the Department's arm's length bodies. Total Departmental expenditure on research and development, and what proportion of the Department's total net expenditure this represents, is shown in the following table.

	Total R&D spend (£ million)	*R&D as proportion of total net Departmental spend (Percentage)*
1997–98	486	1.38
1998–99	481	1.05
1999–2000	501	1.02
2000–01	510	1.01
2001–02	538	0.80
2002–03	574	0.86

Expenditure before 1998–99 is on a cash basis. Spend figures from 1999–2000 are on a resource budgeting basis, and total net spend for these years includes NHS pensions. Figures are not therefore directly comparable across the period.

No amount is allocated separately for research and development relating to public health. Research in this field is funded from the PRP and NHS research and development budgets and comprises most of the research carried out by the Department's arm's length bodies, including the Health Protection Agency. Management of much of the research on public health supported by NHS research and development funding is devolved and expenditure at project level is not held centrally by the Department. Details of on-going and recently completed research projects funded by, or of interest to, the NHS are available on the national research register at www.doh.gov.uk/research/nrr.htm.

Security Passes

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in his Department in the last 12 months. [144593]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[pursuant to her reply on 5 January 2004, Official Report, column 208W]*: I regret my previous response was incorrect. The response should read as follows:

"From the records available, we estimate that about 110 Department of Health headquarters building photo passes have been lost or stolen in the period 17 December 2002 to 16 December 2003."

Shellfish

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the latest scientific advice he has received on the testing of shellfish for toxins. [146367]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 8 January 2003]*: The testing of shellfish for toxins is a public health matter, which falls within the policy responsibility of the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Unusual results have been observed over the last two years in tests for diarrhetic shellfish poisoning toxins under the statutory monitoring programmes, which point to the possible presence of a new neurotoxin. These have therefore resulted in the temporary closure, from time to time, of some shellfish harvesting waters, as a precautionary measure to ensure that public health continues to be protected. The FSA is pursuing an extensive programme of work to resolve the issues associated with these findings.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of how the two week wait rule for skin cancer has affected the waiting times for the treatment of urgent non-cancerous skin conditions. [145144]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 5 January 2003]*: The two week outpatient waiting time standard was introduced for urgent cases of suspected cancer from December 2000. Performance data is published

quarterly and currently (as at 30 September 2003) shows that 98.7 per cent. of patients urgently referred for suspected skin cancer who fall within the standard were seen within 14 days.

By 2005, there will be targets of a maximum one month wait from diagnosis to treatment and a maximum two month wait from urgent general practitioner referral to treatment for all cancers.

Comparable data on urgent referrals for non-cancer skin conditions is not collected centrally and therefore no assessment has been made of the impact of the cancer two week wait upon waiting times for treatment of non-cancer skin conditions.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness and benefits of rapid referral clinics for skin cancer. [145145]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 5 January 2003]*: The Department has commissioned the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to develop guidance on skin tumours, including melanoma, for use in the National Health Service in England and Wales. This guidance will advise on the optimal configuration of diagnostic and treatment services for patients with skin cancer. In developing this guidance, NICE will assess the best available evidence in order to make recommendations on the optimum provision of skin cancer services. This will include consideration of a variety of settings and workforce roles. The guidance is due to be published in March 2005.

In addition, we have asked NICE to update the referral guidelines for suspected cancer published by the Department in April 2000, to assist general practitioners in determining those patients who are most likely to have cancer and therefore need to be referred urgently to see a specialist. Both the existing guidance and the revised guidance will address skin cancers.

St. George's Hospital, London

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investigations *(a)* have taken place and *(b)* are underway into waiting lists at St. Georges' Hospital, London. [145768]

Mr. Hutton: South West London Strategic Health Authority has advised me that no investigations have taken place or are underway into waiting lists at St. George's Hospital, London.

Staffing (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* medical and clinical staff and *(b)* other types of staff were employed in the NHS in Cambridgeshire according to the most recently available survey of staffing. [146451]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is shown in the table.

Hospital, Public Health Medicine and Community Health Services (HCHS) Staff, General Medical Practitioners, Practice staff and Non-Medical staff employed within the specified PCTs, as at 30 September 2002—England

Number (headcount)

	All staff	*of which:* *HCHS Staff*[1]	*of which:* *Medical Staff*	*Dental Staff*	*All General Medical Practitioners*[2]	*of which:* *NHS Plan GPs*[3]	*of which:* *Unrestricted Principal and Equivalents (UPEs)*[4]
5AF North Peterborough PCT	708	4	2	2	58	57	57
5AG South Peterborough PCT	453	8	8	—	59	52	52
5GF Huntingdonshire PCT	1,045	81	72	9	104	89	89
5JH Cambridge City PCT	806	7	7	—	100	86	86
5JJ South Cambridgeshire PCT	562	17	12	5	77	63	62
5JK East Cambridgeshire and Fenland PCT	1,108	1	1	—	90	78	78
RCX Kings Lynn and Wisbech Hospitals NHS Trust	2,360	214	205	9	—	—	—
RGN Peterborough Hospitals NHS Trust	3,446	282	269	13	—	—	—
RGP James Paget Healthcare NHS Trust	2,776	205	193	12	—	—	—
RGQ Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust	3,527	297	280	17	—	—	—
RGR West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust	2,582	201	198	3	—	—	—
RGT Addenbrookes NHS Trust	6,186	754	740	14	—	—	—
RM1 Norfolk and Norwich Health Care NHS Trust	5,277	521	504	17	—	—	—
RQQ Hinchingbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust	1,585	121	121	—	—	—	—

	Practice staff[5] *employed by UPEs*	*Total Non-Medical Staff*	*of which:* *Professionally qualified clinical staff*	*Support to clinical staff*	*NHS infrastructure support*	*Other and unknown*
5AF North Peterborough PCT	231	415	214	154	47	—
5AG South Peterborough PCT	148	238	140	62	36	—
5GF Huntingdonshire PCT	314	546	291	139	116	—
5JH Cambridge City PCT	291	408	208	157	37	6
5JJ South Cambridgeshire PCT	247	221	130	48	43	—
5JK East Cambridgeshire and Fenland PCT	260	757	387	287	83	—
RCX Kings Lynn and Wisbech Hospitals NHS Trust	—	2,146	902	790	451	3
RGN Peterborough Hospitals NHS Trust	—	3,164	1,447	1,270	441	6
RGP James Paget Healthcare NHS Trust	—	2,571	992	1,077	501	1
RGQ Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust	—	3,230	1,722	1,165	343	—
RGR West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust	—	2,381	1,175	834	372	—
RGT Addenbrookes NHS Trust	—	5,432	2,984	1,767	681	—
RM1 Norfolk and Norwich Health Care NHS Trust	—	4,756	2,410	1,932	409	5
RQQ Hinchingbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust	—	1,464	685	462	315	2

[1] Excludes Hospital Medical Hospital Practitioners and Hospital Medical Clinical Assistants, most of whom are GPs working part time in hospitals.
[2] All Practitioners include UPEs, Restricted Principals, Assistants, GP Registrars, Salaried Doctors (Para 52 SFA), PMS Other and GP Retainers.
[3] NHS Plan GPs includes GMS Unrestricted Principals, PMS Contracted GPs, PMS Salaried GPs, Restricted Principals, Assistants, Salaried Doctors and PMS Other.
[4] UPEs include GMS Unrestricted Principals, PMS Contracted GPs and PMS Salaried GPs.
[5] Practice Staff includes Practice Nurses, Direct Patient Care, Admin and Clerical and Other.
Source:
Department of Health Medical and Dental Workforce Census
Department of Health General and Personal Medical Services Statistics
Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census

Strategic Health Authorities

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed by strategic health authorities in *(a)* April 2002 and *(b)* April 2003; and what the projected figures are for (i) April and (ii) October 2004. [145370]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is shown in the table for September 2002, the latest available data. Projected figures are not available.

NHS medical, dental and non-medical staff directly employed in strategic health authorities—England, as at 30 September 2002

Numbers (headcount)

		All HCHS staff (HCHS medical, dental and non-medical)
	England	3,968
Q01	Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire SHA	40
Q02	Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire SHA	57
Q03	Essex SHA	103
Q04	North West London SHA	69
Q05	North Central London SHA	104
Q06	North East London SHA	140
Q07	South East London SHA	84
Q08	South West London SHA	43
009	Northumberland, Tyne and Wear SHA	203
Q10	County Durham and Tees Valley SHA	84
Q11	North and East Yorks and North Lines SHA	66
Q12	West Yorkshire SHA	152
Q13	Cumbria and Lancashire SHA	36
Q14	Greater Manchester SHA	301
Q15	Cheshire and Merseyside SHA	487
Q16	Thames Valley SHA	115
Q17	Hampshire and Isle Of Wight SHA	188
Q18	Kent and Medway SHA	238
Q19	Surrey and Sussex SHA	333
Q20	Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire SHA	59
Q21	South West Peninsula SHA	75
Q22	Dorset and Somerset SHA	101
Q23	South Yorkshire SHA	257
Q24	Trent SHA	142
Q25	Leics, Northants and Rutland SHA	188
Q26	Shropshire and Staffordshire SHA	62
Q27	Birmingham and the Black Country SHA	166
Q28	Coventry, Warwicks, Herefords and Worcs SHA	75

Sources:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census,
Department of Health non-medical workforce census

Top-up Fees

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether foundation hospitals will be permitted to pay the *(a)* tuition and *(b)* top-up fees of recruits. [144394]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* National health service foundation trusts, like all NHS trusts, would in principle have the power to pay both the tuition and top-up fees of recruits. It would be up to each NHS foundation trust as to whether and in what circumstances to do so. Section 18(1) of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act gives NHS foundation trusts the power to do anything which appears to it to be necessary or desirable for the purposes of or in connection with its functions.

Transplant Services

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures his Department has put in place to counter the shortages of *(a)* transplant consultants and *(b)* critical care nurses in the NHS outlined in the Transplant Framework for England, Saving Lives, Valuing Donors. [144891]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The NHS Plan set challenging workforce objectives to increase staff numbers significantly and redesign jobs with more staff working differently. The Department has arranged for 11 additional surgical training places to be funded specifically to train transplant surgeons.

Between September 1999 and March 2002, a net increase of 28,740 nurses working in the national health service has meant the NHS Plan target for nurses, 20,000 by 2004, has been achieved early. The NHS has a plan to recruit an additional 35,000 nurses by 2008—a proportion of whom will be working in critical care.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what system will be put in place to monitor and evaluate the measurements of progress outlined in the Transplant Framework for England, Saving Lives, Valuing Donors; and what action he will take in the event of primary care trusts failing to make progress;. [144892]

(2) what role he envisages charities and voluntary organisations will play in the implementation of the Transplant Framework for England, Saving Lives, Valuing Donors; [144893]

(3) whether his Department will be providing additional funding for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Transplant Framework for England, Saving Lives, Valuing Donors. [144932]

Ms Rosie Winterton: UK Transplant already closely monitors most aspects of organ donation and transplantation. The information UK Transplant collects and analyses on organ donation and transplant activity is available on its web-site at www.uktransplant.org.uk. In developing their transplant services, it will be for primary care trusts and specialist commissioning teams to take account of local needs and priorities to allocate resources and benchmark their performance against published activity data. As organ transplantation is of proven clinical

and cost effectiveness, maximising donation and transplantation rates will be important for both patients and the National Health Service.

We envisage that voluntary organisations will continue to play an important part in research, raising awareness about organ donation, particularly by encouraging people to join the organ donor register and supporting the families of donors and transplant recipients.

The Department has provided around £7 million via UK Transplant since 2001 to boost organ donation through the employment of 35 donor liaison nurses working with staff in critical units to help identify potential donors and how to approach and support relatives; 23 living donor co-ordinators working with families considering live donation and funding 10 non-heartbeating programmes to increase the number of organs from non-heartbeating donors.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to introduce an opt-out scheme for organ donation. [145427]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Government policy on organ donation is one of informed consent, not presumed consent (opt out). The Government reviewed the law on the removal, retention and use of human tissues and organs and tissues during 2003 and the resulting Human Tissue Bill, which was laid before Parliament on 2 December 2003, does not propose to change this policy.

Variant CJD

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the risk of possible infection with variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease from large pools of plasma; and what the likely effects are of dilution of infected blood products in large pools. [145450]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department has commissioned a risk assessment to consider these questions and findings are not yet available.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department takes to trace recipients of blood donated by donors identified as having *(a)* variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease and *(b)* other blood-borne diseases. [145453]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Transfusion Medicine Epidemiology Review is a collaborative project between the United Kingdom National CJD Surveillance Unit (NCJDSU) and United Kingdom Blood Services (UKBS). The main purpose is to investigate whether there is any evidence that Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease or variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease may have been transmitted via the blood supply.

Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease cases are notified to the UKBS by NCJDSU; a search establishes whether any have acted as donors. Donation records are checked and all components traced through hospital records. Details of all identified recipients are forwarded to NCJDSU for subsequent checking.

In the reverse procedure, patients with variant CJD reported to have received blood transfusions are identified by NCJDSU and notified to UKBS. Details of transfusions are traced through hospital records and relevant blood donors identified. The identity of donors is notified to NCJDSU for subsequent checking.

The safety of blood used in the National Health Service is of paramount importance. Every reasonable step has been taken to minimise any risks during blood transfusion. The current high levels of safety are achieved by screening out potential high risk donors and then further testing of every unit of donated blood for HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Human T Cell Leukaemia Virus, and Syphilis before it is released to NHS hospitals.

Waiting Times (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the average waiting time for a first consultant appointment in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1999. [146450]

Dr. Ladyman: Information relating to national health service trust waiting times, including trusts in Cambridge, for first consultation appointments can be obtained from the Department's at www.doh.gov.uk/waitingtimes/.

The Trusts in Cambridgeshire are:

Addenbrooke's Hospital NHS Trust

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

Hinchingbrooke Health Care NHS Trust

Papworth Hospital NHS Trust

Peterborough Hospitals NHS Trust

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 13 January 2004

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agricultural Chemicals

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking following the meeting on 6 January between her Department's Ministers and industry and other representatives to ensure compatibility of chemicals used in agriculture and horticulture with the regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH); what consultation has taken place with farming organisations; and if she will make a statement. [147177]

Alun Michael: To ensure compatibility of regulation, the REACH proposal allows for certain substances to be exempt or considered as automatically registered where environmental or human health protection is already adequately covered by existing regimes such as for pesticides, biocides and veterinary medicines. Discussions have therefore focused on those industry sectors and uses most likely to be affected by the proposals, such as manufacturers of industrial chemicals, and we have not been approached by farming organisations to discuss REACH.

We will shortly issue a public consultation paper, which will offer all interested parties, including farming organisations, a further opportunity to provide us with their views. There are also plans to hold a stakeholder conference during the consultation period.

Chemical Regulation

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which Council of Ministers formation her Department has called on to lead the debate on the forthcoming EU chemical regulation. [147230]

Alun Michael: Given the wide-ranging nature of the forthcoming EU chemical regulation, the Government have always considered it essential that the expertise of both the Competitiveness Council and the Environment Council would be needed in coming to decisions on the regulation on registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals.

Following the decision of the Italian presidency to ask the Competitiveness Council to lead this debate, we welcome the formation of an ad-hoc working group between the two as a way to enable this wide input to detailed policy discussions. Such an approach is essential if we are to make good progress with this long awaited legislation. I recently visited Brussels to discuss the issues with parliamentarians and the Environment Commission's team and in the UK Ministers at Defra and DTI are working closely with each other and with both industry and non-governmental organisations to give the Commission's latest proposals the best possible scrutiny from all perspectives.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many staff in her Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146908]

Alun Michael: The information is as follows:

(a) Defra has 734 staff working in the West Midlands. A further 147 Defra Executive Agency staff work in this Region.
(b) Neither Defra nor any of its Agencies has offices in North Staffordshire.

Fisheries

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which other European Union member states' fishing vessels will have to comply with the restricted areas in EU waters due to commence on 1 February. [146682]

Mr. Bradshaw: All those which choose to fish in the restricted areas using the specified gears.

Information Campaigns

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much the Department spent on information campaigns and advertising in 2002–03. [145248]

Alun Michael: The Department does not maintain records of its expenditure on marketing separately. The expenditure for publicity by Defra's Communications Directorate, which includes advertising, publications, events, shows and direct information literature mailings, in the financial year 2002–03 was £4.7 million.

This included communication on a very wide range of matters, much of it necessary or beneficial to the public and the wide range of industries in which Defra has an interest, together with local government, voluntary organisations and other bodies.

Teesside Power Station

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has carried out into the health implications of allowing the burning of animal fat from cattle at the Teesside power station, Witton. [147403]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency is currently determining a permit application under the Pollution Prevention and Control (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 from SembCorp Utilities Teesside Limited who operate the Teesside power station. The company plans to burn tallow that is currently held in storage as a result of the Over Thirty Month (Slaughter) Scheme (OTMS).

The Agency has produced an OTMS Tallow Protocol that provides guidance to Agency Officers and operators on the determination procedure for applications to burn OTMS tallow. The Protocol states that the Operator

must provide an environmental risk assessment of their proposals, including the risks of burning, handling, filtration, and any other pathways by which potential BSE infectivity might affect human health or the environment.

As required by the Regulations, the Agency sent a copy of the operator's application to the local Primary Care Trust. The Agency has received a response on their behalf by the Tees Local Health Protection Unit. The response stated that the information from the application had been considered, together with additional information provided in a report by the European Commission's Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) entitled "The Safety of Tallow Obtained from Ruminant Slaughter By-products" and a "Risk Assessment for the Transport and Combustion of OTMS Tallow" by Det Norske Veritas Limited (DNV). Information had also been provided to the Health Protection Unit by a representative of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC).

The Tees Local Health Protection Unit response included the conclusions that, on the basis of the information supplied, the risks to individuals contracting vCJD[1] as a result of the transportation to and combustion of the tallow at the power station can be described as being negligible.

The Environment Agency is considering this response and the additional information provided by the SSC and DNV as part of its determination of the application.

The Agency is also taking into account UK and European air quality standards and objectives in its determination These are set at levels which are unlikely to cause harm to human health.

[1] vCJD: variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reason pesticides still hold provisional approval after five years; what the longest period is for which a pesticide has held provisional approval; and what she estimates the total tonnage used in the UK of pesticides provisionally approved in each category to be in the most recent year for which figures are available. [145176]

Alun Michael: All pesticides must meet a minimum standard of safety and efficacy before any approval is given, provisional or otherwise. Provisional approvals are given in order for confirmatory data to be provided for example in areas such as efficacy. The precise requirements and time allowed for the generation of those data vary depending on individual products.

The product that has held provisional approval status for the longest time was first given that status in 1988. Safe use of the product was established, but confirmatory efficacy data were required for full approval. Consequently, a series of different provisional approvals were issued in response to separate applications for approval concerning changes to the product label and its intended uses.

The most recent estimates of the total tonnage of all provisionally approved pesticides used in the UK (in 2002) are as follows.

Category	*Tonnage (active ingredient)*
Fungicides	1,285
Growth regulators	394
Herbicides	3,029
Insecticides	59
Molluscicides	87
Others	<1
Total	4,854

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) whether local authorities will be fully compensated for costs incurred under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive; [146980]

(2) whether she intends that manufacturers and retailers of electrical goods should contribute to costs incurred by local authorities under the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment Directive; [146981]

(3) what estimate she has made of the cost to local authorities of complying with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive in relation to *(a)* start-up costs, *(b)* storage costs, *(c)* collection costs and *(d)* disposal costs. [146982]

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

The implications of the EU Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) for local authorities, manufacturers, retailers and others are set out in a consultation paper which the Government published on 25 November 2003. This is available at or may be downloaded from the Department's website at http://www.dti.gov.uk/sustainability/weee/index.htm. Copies are available in the House Library.

This consultation paper invites views on the Government's preferred approach to implementing the Directive. It includes proposals for implementation of the Directive's provisions on producer responsibility and retailer take-back.

The WEEE Directive places no obligations on local authorities. The Government have made it clear that there will be no new unfinanced burdens on local authorities as a result of the Directive. However, the Government aims to encourage increased separate collection of WEEE in line with the Directive's objectives and, in this context, it makes sense to build on existing collection activity at civic amenity sites. The Government wishes to encourage local authorities to consider upgrading and/or introducing WEEE collection facilities at their amenity sites. It is proposed that money will be made available, via a fund, into which local authorities may bid to finance improved or greater separate collection of WEEE at their civic amenity sites.

The consultation suggests that this fund would be provided through a retailer take-back compliance scheme. The Government propose that the retailer scheme should provide funding initially of at least £5 million for civic amenity site upgrades in each of the five financial years between 2005–10, with an interim review in 2008, when the Directive is expected to be revised. It is expected that most of the early expenditure would relate to capital costs and any initial operating costs.

The Government have included in its consultation package a report by consultants Network Recycling on the scope for upgrading and expanding WEEE collection at civic amenity sites around the UK. In summary, this report indicates that over half of civic amenity sites currently collect some WEEE and that there is significant scope for expanding this on the basis of site space available. It suggests that the baseline costs of such upgrades are in the region of £6-£12 million, depending on the approach taken; and that on-going staffing and training costs could be in the region of £4–£9 million per annum.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Pre-legislative Scrutiny

39. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Leader of the House what recent discussions he has had with Government Departments and Select Committee Chairmen on the programme for pre-legislative scrutiny; and if he will make a statement. [147115]

Mr. Woolas: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with Ministerial colleagues to discuss the legislative programme, including the programme for pre-legislative scrutiny. He met the Liaison Committee to discuss pre-legislative scrutiny, among other matters, on 11 November; and he wrote to all Committee Chairmen with a provisional list of draft bills for the current session shortly after the Queen's Speech.

Sitting Hours

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Leader of the House what plans he has to record representations he receives for and against the *(a)* present sitting hours of the House and *(b)* September sitting of the House. [146837]

Mr. Hain: To record the many informal representations I receive would be impractical, especially as many do not fall into a clear "for" or "against" category. However, as I announced to the House last week, the Modernisation Committee is to survey Members' views as part of a formal review of the sitting hours change.

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Leader of the House what plans he has to review the sitting hours of the House. [147110]

Mr. Hain: As I announced to the House last Thursday, the Modernisation Committee intends to review the sitting hours. I am keen that the Committee should explore a range of options with a view to establishing a new and durable consensus.

Mr. Lazarowicz: To ask the Leader of the House what assessment he has made of the impact of the new sitting hours of the House on the times of committee meetings. [147114]

Mr. Hain: I am aware that some Members have found the time of Standing Committees irksome and am willing to consider this further. I have also discussed with the Liaison Committee the impact of the sitting hours on Select Committee meetings.

TREASURY

Financial Advisers

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made of the current qualification levels for financial advisers; and what assessment he has made of whether these are of a high enough standard to protect the public; [147637]

(2) if he will make a statement on the badging and level of qualifications for financial advisers; and what assessment he has made as to ways in which this could be simplified; [147638]

(3) what assessment he has made of the extent to which a simpler form of badging to indicate the qualification and level of competence of a financial adviser would improve consumer confidence. [147639]

Ruth Kelly: Consumer protection should take account of the requirement that those working in the financial services industry are capable of properly performing the work they undertake at all levels, and that consumers should thereby have confidence in the competence of financial advisers.

The Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 charges the Financial Services Authority (FSA) with securing the appropriate degree of protection for consumers. Vetting by the FSA aims to allow only those firms and individuals satisfying the necessary criteria (including competence) to engage in regulated activity.

The FSA sets training and competence policy, including minimum standards for regulated firms and examination standards. The purpose of the FSA is to set the standards of training and competence that firms should reach.

The FSA works closely with both the industry and consumers, and keeps training and competence requirements under review. It carried out a significant review of the qualification regime for financial services in November 2002. In particular the FSA proposed in Consultation Paper 194 (CP194) that the training arrangements should be simplified and competence assessed by using examinations that are 'appropriate' rather than a published list of FSA 'approved' examinations. This proposal gives firms greater flexibility, because they will be able to choose an examination that is appropriate in their circumstances.

The FSA liaises closely with the Skills Council for Financial Services to ensure that consumer protection is at the forefront of training and competence policy. The Skills Council for Financial Services has responsibility to develop world class occupational standards in the financial services sector and to ensure that all sector specific qualifications are based on them.

Financial Services

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on developments in financial services. [148151]

Ruth Kelly: I am replying as the Minister responsible for financial services.

Under the terms of the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between the Treasury, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and the Bank of England (dated 28 October 1997), the FSA have kept me informed of developments at Standard Life, which have led to this morning's statement by the FSA.

The FSA have responsibility for regulatory decisions under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (FSMA), including the setting up of a review under Section 166. They have informed the Treasury of their decision to commission a review by independent experts into the origins and implications of the significant divergence in the calculation of Standard Life's liabilities.

I will continue to keep the House informed of developments.

Red Diesel

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the estimated loss to his Department was from the fraudulent manufacture and use of red diesel in each of the last five years for which there are records. [145485]

John Healey: HM Customs and Excise's latest estimates of the overall revenue loss from all forms of diesel fraud in Great Britain and the overall revenue loss from all forms of diesel fraud and legitimate cross-border shopping of diesel in Northern Ireland in 2000, 2001 and 2002 are set out in their Annual Report (HC 52) published in December 2003.

The following table sets out Customs' latest estimates of the revenue loss in 1998 and 1999:

£ million

	Great Britain (diesel fraud)	*Northern Ireland (diesel fraud and legitimate cross border shopping of diesel)*
1998	750	85
1999	900	175

Customs believe the great majority of diesel fraud on the British mainland, and a significant loss in Northern Ireland, involve the misuse of rebated or low-tax fuels supplied for non-road use, but a specific estimate of loss from red diesel alone is not available.

VAT (Motorcycle Helmets)

Mr. Drew: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when, and on what basis, motorcycle helmets were made subject to VAT. [147107]

John Healey: Motorcycle helmets which meet the necessary approved standards have been VAT zero-rated since 1 June 1974. The Government have made clear in negotiations on the European Commission's review of reduced VAT rates that we will not agree to the removal of any of our zero or reduced VAT rate derogations.

WALES

Dee Cockle Regulation Order

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Dee Cockle Regulation Order to be implemented. [144779]

Mr. Touhig: Responsibility for managing the Dee Estuary rests with the Environment Agency in its role as a Sea Fisheries Committee. As the Dee Estuary straddles the Wales/England border, Defra and the Welsh Assembly will act jointly to make a single Regulating Order under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967, once the Environment Agency Wales, is in a position to submit a formal application for the Order. The Agency is in the process of obtaining written consents from landowners and it will forward an application when these are received.

Both the Welsh Assembly and Defra will ensure that the application is processed as quickly as possible under the terms of the 1967 Act, but the process can take up to two years.

Fair Trade Products

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is the policy of his Department to use fair trade products, as a matter of course, in *(a)* sales on departmental premises and *(b)* receptions and meetings involving staff and visitors. [142809]

Mr. Hain: My office does not have a refreshment facility in which it could stock and sell fair trade products.

While there is currently no Government-wide approach to the procurement of fair trade products, we will endeavour to use them for official entertaining, subject to this being value for money.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Children's Green Paper

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what arrangements are already in existence to register children on a national register. [145656]

Margaret Hodge: There are no arrangements in existence to register children on a national register. There are no plans for children to be included on a national register.

E-Registration Systems

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have *(a)* been awarded Department for Education and Skills funds for e-registration, *(b)* installed e-registration and *(c)* have fully operational e-registration systems. [R] [146750]

Mr. Charles Clarke: My Department has provided 480 secondary schools with funding to purchase electronic registration systems. Another 61 schools are in the process of claiming such funding. However, schools may use other funds to purchase e-registration systems and they are not required to inform the

Department when they do so. So the information required to answer parts *(b)* and *(c)* of the right hon. Member's question is not available centrally.

Education Funding

Mr. Kidney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answers of 11 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 608W, on education spending, what effect the announcement of additional funding for 2004–05 in the Chancellor's pre-Budget report will have on the sums provided; and what the sums provided were in 2003–04. [146521]

Mr. Miliband: The additional funding provided in the Chancellor's pre-Budget report affects the Revenue Support Grant payable to authorities rather than the Formula Spending Shares, which remain unchanged. The basic entitlement in the Education formula Spending Share in 2003–04 was £2,004.65 for primary pupils and £2,656.92 for secondary pupils.

Environmental Engineering

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans he has to increase opportunities for young people in the field of environmental engineering, with particular reference to the provision of *(a)* courses in further education and *(b)* modern apprenticeships. [146545]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There are a number of different routes into careers and relevant university courses in environmental engineering. Young people choosing this area will therefore benefit from the Government's commitment to increase opportunities to study or train in a variety of subjects in both colleges and Modern Apprenticeships. A range of academic and vocational subjects, together with Modern Apprenticeship frameworks, are available in the areas of engineering, science, construction and the environment. The relevant sector bodies for this area LANTRA covering land based industries and SEMTA covering engineering are working with employers in their sectors to promote these careers to young people and with the Learning and Skills Council expand the range of opportunities available.

Fresh Water (School Dining Rooms)

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the availability of fresh water in school dining rooms; and if he will make a statement. [146351]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: All schools are required to have a wholesome supply of drinking water. However, it is for local education authorities, governors and schools to decide how and when drinking water should be made available to pupils.

Guidance produced by this Department advises caterers on meeting the requirements of the Government's nutritional standards for school lunches and recommends that drinking water should be made available to all pupils every day, free of charge. The DfES, in partnership with the Food Standards Agency, are currently examining school meals provision in 80 maintained secondary schools in England. This exercise will also consider the extent to which complementary guidance, which covers drinking water provision, is adhered to. Results of the exercise are due in late spring 2004.

Higher Education Expansion

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what his estimate is of the cost of the current phase of expansion of higher education in annual revenue terms. [147562]

Alan Johnson: Funding for higher education in England between 2002–03 and 2005–06 was set out in the White Paper, "The Future of Higher Education" (Cm 5735), published in January 2003. The overall funding for higher education—including the costs of expansion—will increase by 31 per cent. between those years from £7,596 million to £9,918 million.

Information Technology

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on differences in information technology curricula between the main examination boards. [146658]

Mr. Miliband: The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is responsible for ensuring the GCSE specifications, including those in ICT, are consistent with the National Curriculum programmes of study, conform to publicly available subject criteria published by the regulatory authorities, and are of a consistent rigour and standards. The subject specific criteria set out a framework for aims, assessment objectives, and schemes of assessment required in syllabuses. Each awarding body is then free to develop GCSE specifications within the framework.

I have asked the Chief Executive of the QCA to write to you providing further details of individual awarding body specifications.

Mobile Phones

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the Government's policy is on the use of mobile phones in schools by *(a)* pupils and *(b)* staff. [146661]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The use of mobile phones in schools, by pupils, is a local matter to be determined by the headteacher, school governing body and/or the local education authority. The Department has advised schools to take into account the Chief Medical Officer's guidance that children and young people should be encouraged to use their phones for essential purposes only and to keep the calls short. The Department has not issued guidance for teacher's use of mobile phones.

Education Standards

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what methods are used to measure regional differences in educational standards. [146663]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Department publishes a wide variety of data on the performance of schools and other education institutions, including 'value added' measures. Much of this is published in Statistical Bulletins, Statistical First Releases and Statistical

Volumes of Education as well as Performance Tables. These sources provide information at school, LEA, Regional, and national level. This data is used by bodies such as Regional Development Agencies and the Learning and Skills Council to help develop regional and local strategies to improve education and skills attainment.

School Meals

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the impact on the nutrient content of school meals of the metric used by the Audit Commission Best Value Inspectors for school catering services. [146349]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: This Department has not made any such assessment as the Audit Commission as part of Ofsted LEA inspections uses the food based approach set out in the Nutritional Standards Regulations in its inspections of school catering services.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make it his policy to *(a)* implement national nutrient-based standards for (i) school breakfasts and (ii) school lunches and *(b)* make arrangements for monitoring their implementation. [146350]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: There are no plans to require maintained schools to provide breakfasts. Schools are required to provide free lunches to eligible pupils, and lunches for other pupils where a request for one is made, that meet the school lunch nutritional standards.

We carried out two consultations before introducing the national nutritional standards in 2001. Most of those consulted thought that food based standards would be simpler to implement and monitor, and would be consistent with cross Government policies that support children in making healthy eating choices. Most importantly, they are easily understood by children.

Teachers (Chorley)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time (i) primary and (ii) secondary school teachers were employed in Chorley constituency in each of the last three years. [146973]

Mr. Miliband: The following table shows the numbers of full-time and part-time regular teachers, employed in each January between 2001 and 2003, in primary and secondary schools in Chorley constituency.

	Maintained primary[1]		*Maintained secondary*[1]	
	Full-time[2]	*Part-time*[2]	*Full-time*[2]	*Part-time*[2]
2001	340	120	400	70
2002	340	110	420	70
2003	350	120	430	60

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.
[2] Includes qualified and other teaching staff.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census.

Teachers (Huntingdon)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many full-time *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school teachers were employed in Huntingdon on 1 December 2003. [146435]

Mr. Miliband: Constituency level data for regular teachers are collected on the Annual Schools' Census in January of each year. The most recent data available for primary and secondary full-time regular teachers is at January 2003. These data are shown in the following table.

Full-time teachers[1] *in maintained schools in Huntingdon constituency*

	Number
Primary[2]	380
Secondary[2]	420

[1] Includes qualified and other teaching staff.
[2] Includes middle schools as deemed.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census.

Toilet Training

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment has been made of toilet training for children; and whether any research has been conducted on this subject. [146727]

Dr. Ladyman: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Health has not commissioned any recent research on links between bowel and bladder problems in children and child abuse.

Data on the number of parents accused, and admitting to abuse of their children as result of enuresis are not collected centrally.

A study published in 1997, based on data from the national study of health and growth, found that a father's social class was associated with enuresis only in girls, with a higher prevalence in those whose fathers were manual workers.

"Good practice in continence services", issued by the Department in April 2000, provides guidance to primary care trusts (PCTs) on continence services. This includes that PCTs should have specialist continence services in place, which provide patients with an individual assessment of their needs. Provision of these services in England is a matter for PCTs, which are responsible for determining the level of services required to meet the needs of their local populations. The Department does not monitor provision in this level of detail.

Toilet training for children is considered in the Department of Health guide, "Birth to Five", available free to first time mothers and at www.doh.gov.uk/birthtofive/. The Department has not commissioned any recent research on toilet training for children.

Unauthorised Absence

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many pupils missed, through unauthorised absence, *(a)* one half-day session, *(b)* between two and five half-day sessions, *(c)* between

six and 10 half-day sessions, *(d)* between 11 and 15 half-day sessions, *(e)* between 16 and 20 half-day sessions and *(f)* over 20 half-day sessions in each year since 1997. [147145]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The information requested is not available. The Pupil Absence Return requires schools to provide only the number of pupils with at least one unauthorised absence. From the data collected, it is possible to calculate the average number of half-days missed per absent pupil due to unauthorised absence and the figures since 1997 are shown as follows:

Academic year	*Average number of half-days missed per absent pupil due to unauthorised absence*
1997/98	15
1998/99	14
1999/2000	13
2000/01	13
2001/02	13
2002/03	12

Note:
Figures are for maintained primary and secondary schools combined.

Tuition Fees

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the amount the proposed top-up fees would raise annually if *(a)* all universities charged the maximum and *(b)* universities on average charged half the maximum. [147563]

Alan Johnson: Information on the costs and benefits associated with the proposal in the Higher Education Bill to allow universities to set their own tuition fees is contained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment, published on 8 January 2004, alongside the Bill. The Regulatory Impact Assessment illustrates the income from additional fees in different scenarios. Because of the nature of a variable scheme, the costs vary greatly according to the decisions that higher education institutions take, and they cannot be estimated precisely at this stage. Copies of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in which year he expects his proposal to increase from £10,000 to £15,000 the income threshold for repayment by graduates of tuition fees to take effect; and whether he plans to take account of possible inflation in the intervening period when setting the threshold. [147724]

Alan Johnson: We plan to increase the threshold for the repayment of student loans from £10,000 to £15,000 with effect from April 2005. No account will be taken of any inflation in the intervening period.

Violent Pupils

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what provisions are being implemented to promote the safety of teachers, with particular reference to violent pupils. [146666]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are investing nearly £470 million over this and the next two years in measures to improve behaviour and attendance in schools. These include training for school staff in managing pupil behaviour and preventing violence. We have also made it clear that head teachers may permanently exclude pupils responsible for violence. New legislation in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act will enable local education authorities to apply for court-imposed Parenting Orders for parents whose children have been excluded from school for serious misbehaviour. And we have issued "A legal toolkit for schools", which identifies legal remedies available when school staff experience problems with violent parents. Some of these are also available when dealing with violent pupils.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many staff in her Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146918]

Mr. Caborn: There are currently no staff in my department that work in the West Midlands or North Staffordshire area.

Hotel Accommodation (VAT)

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make representations to the Chancellor to undertake a review of value added tax levels on hotel accommodation. [147250]

Mr. Caborn: DCMS has no plans at present to make representations to the Chancellor to review the rate of VAT on hotel accommodation, but we will continue to monitor the position carefully in consultation with the tourism and hospitality industry. Inconsidering the rate of VAT for hotels, the Government has to consider a wide range of issues such as the rate paid by other industries and the impact on revenue to the Exchequer, both in the short and longer term. The Government's aim is to maintain a tax system that provides the best overall environment for business, but it does keep the system under continual review.

Iraqi National Museum

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport which Government Ministers have recently visited the Iraqi national museum in Baghdad; and if she will make a statement on *(a)* lost, stolen or damaged exhibits belonging to the museum and *(b)* access to the museum and its security. [146362]

Tessa Jowell: No Government Ministers have visited the Iraqi national museum in Baghdad recently. The British Museum is collaborating with the Baghdad Museum on a conservation programme which includes providing training in London for three Iraqi conservators on up to date conservation techniques. Estimates on numbers of missing artefacts are subject to regular revision. Early reports stating that 170,000 pieces had been looted from the museum were misleading. Currently around 30 pieces from the main

collection are still unaccounted for and a further 10–13,000 other pieces may also be missing. Access to the Museum and the security of the Museum, and of its collections is a matter for the Museum and the appropriate Iraqi authorities working in partnership with the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Tourism

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to increase productivity in the tourism industry in 2004. [147253]

Mr. Caborn: Government, in partnership with the wider tourism industry, has identified four key strategic priority areas for increasing productivity in the industry. During 2004, DCMS will continue the work that is already in progress on domestic and overseas marketing through direct funding to VisitBritain and development of the EnglandNet initiative, on raising skills through supporting the establishment of a Sector Skills Council, by driving up quality through the Fitness for Purpose initiative and a review of the current accommodation quality grading schemes, and by improving tourism data through a review of data quality and availability with a view to strengthening statistics. A fifth priority for DCMS is to strengthen the advocacy of tourism across government at all levels. By concentrating on these areas, we aim to drive up productivity in the sector and to develop a highly competitive industry with sustainable foundations for long-term growth.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the fairness of the recent parliamentary elections in Turkish Cyprus; and if he will make a statement. [147106]

Mr. Straw: The 14 December elections to the "Assembly" of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", although not officially recognised, were an important opportunity for the Turkish Cypriot people to express their views on the island's future. A small team of academics from the University of Oslo carried out an independent study of the elections and the pre-electoral period. They noted some serious concerns about the manner in which the campaign was conducted. Lack of impartiality in the media was one area highlighted. The final report from the University of Oslo team is expected within the next month.

We too have noted the widespread concerns expressed by many Turkish Cypriots about the way the campaign was conducted. There were numerous reports of intimidation and also of rigging of the electoral register. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. MacShane) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) on 17 November 2003, *Official Report*, columns 657–58W.

As far as we are aware, elections on the day were conducted in a fair and open manner. We welcome the fact that notwithstanding these concerns about the campaign, the majority of the population in the north of Cyprus voted for candidates committed to a solution to the Cyprus problem. We encourage all sides to work now for a settlement to the Cyprus problem based on the UN Secretary General's proposals (the Annan Plan) by 1 May.

HGV Drivers (Detention)

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British heavy goods vehicle drivers are held in prisons in EU countries, broken down by country. [146961]

Mr. Mullin: The following is a breakdown of the number of British lorry drivers that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been made aware of held in detention in each European Union country as of 8 January 2004:

	Number
France	60
Belgium	9
Spain	4
Italy	1
Germany	1
Sweden	1
Netherlands	0
Luxemburg	0
Denmark	0
Portugal	0
Greece	0
Austria	0
Ireland	0
Finland	0

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether all member states agreed to the Intergovernmental Conference Final Declaration issued by the Italian Presidency. [146951]

Mr. MacShane: The Declaration on the Intergovernmental Conference was concluded on the Presidency's own authority and annexed to the European Council Conclusions. The main elements of it were, however, presented to the European Council before it concluded on 13 December 2003.

International Treaties

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will name the judicial body and its treaty or other international basis empowered to adjudicate and provide interpretations and judgments concerning *(a)* the international treaties comprising the core structure and operation of the principal Treaties of the European Community and Union and *(b)* a formal European Constitution, once agreed, ratified and operative, similar to that under current consideration. [146976]

Mr. MacShane: The European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the Court of First Instance, each within its own jurisdiction, ensure that the law is observed in the interpretation and application of the European Community Treaty, under the terms of its Article 220.

The powers of the ECJ in respect of the Treaty on European Union are set out in that Treaty's Article 46. The ECJ would be responsible for ensuring respect for the law in the interpretation and application of the Constitutional Treaty (draft Article 1.28 (1)).

Libya

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what discussions he has had with his *(a)* Libyan and *(b)* German counterparts concerning the seizure of the German-flagged ship BBC China; [146839]

(2) what part was played by British officials in the recent tracking and seizure of the German-flagged ship BBC China. [146840]

Mr. Straw *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* It is our policy to co-operate with our allies in seeking to take action against the transport of goods which could contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The UK is an active participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative designed to improve international co-ordination in this area. I am withholding further information under exemption 1 of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects that talks will be held with Libya about ending its programme for the development of weapons of mass destruction; which other countries he expects will be involved; and what role the International Atomic Energy Agency will play in the talks. [147071]

Mr. MacShane *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has invited Libyan Foreign Minister Shalgam to visit London soon to discuss a range of bilateral and international issues. This will form part of the process of implementing the decision by Libya to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction programmes. Britain and the United States will now be taking forward the practical issues of verification and of the dismantling of these weapons in partnership with Libya and with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

We have committed ourselves to helping with the preparation of Libya's returns to the IAEA and OPCW and to helping dismantle the programmes Libya has agreed to destroy. Within their respective remits, the responsibility for verifying Libya's declarations lies with the IAEA and the OPCW, and it is for the Libyan authorities to inform these organisations about the details of their programmes. Declarations, as always in these areas, will need to be detailed and comprehensive.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) from which country the BBC China set sail with the cargo of uranium enrichment equipment seized in Italian territorial waters in October 2003; and in which country the equipment was made; [147379]

(2) what happened to the cargo seized from the BBC China in Italy in October 2003. [147380]

Mr. Straw: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him today (UIN146839 & 146840).

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role Mr. Nelson Mandela played in the recent change in relations between Libya and the United States and the United Kingdom. [147410]

Mr. Straw: Mr. Mandela had no involvement in the recent discussions on Libya's weapons programme. These discussions only involved officials and experts from Libya, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Schengen Agreement

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what parts of the Schengen acquis the United Kingdom has applied to participate in since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [145585]

Caroline Flint: I have been asked to reply.

In March 1999, the United Kingdom applied to participate in those parts of the Schengen acquis which relate to police and judicial co-operation, co-operation against drug trafficking and illegal immigration. The UK also applied to participate in the related provisions of the Schengen Information System. My right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary (Jack Straw) made a statement to Parliament on 12 March 1999 setting out this proposed partial participation in Schengen.

The United Kingdom's partial participation in Schengen was agreed by the JHA Council in its Decision of 29 May 2000 (Decision number 2000/365/EC). There has been no further application by the United Kingdom.

Sudan

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Sudan on its treatment of students who support Sudan Organisation Against Torture. [147408]

Mr. Mullin: Our embassy in Khartoum has raised the issue with the Government of Sudan who have acknowledged our concerns and have undertaken to look into the cases and report back to us.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Sudan on the recent arrests in Nyala, Sudan; and if he will make a statement. [147409]

Mr. Mullin: Our embassy in Khartoum has raised the issue with the Government of Sudan who have acknowledged our concerns and have undertaken to look into the cases and report back to us.

I discussed the human rights situation in Sudan generally, and in Darfur more specifically, with the Sudanese Ambassador on 2 December 2003. And my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development (Hilary Benn) raised our concerns with the President of Sudan on 10 December 2003.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Andrew Smith

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to his answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 721W, what working arrangements there have been between Mr. Andrew Smith and his Department in Sierra Leone prior to the last 12 months. [146417]

Hilary Benn: There have been none.

Company Checks

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what checks officials in his Department make on the identities of shareholders and partners in companies which are contracted to provide services for it overseas; and if he will make a statement. [146419]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: We routinely check the financial standing of companies through Companies House and Dun & Bradstreet reports. We do not normally check the identities of company shareholders or partners unless prompted to do so by our standard financial appraisal or other cause.

Developing Countries

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what assessment he has made of the benefits achieved to date for developing countries from the World Trade Organisation agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights and Public Health;. [146592]

(2) whether it is his policy to support compulsory licensing for export of all drugs for life-threatening diseases to least-developed countries. [146593]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I have been asked to reply.

We welcome the Decision of the General Council of the WTO on 30 August 2003 which resolves the outstanding issue from the Doha Ministerial Declaration on the Trade-Related Property Rights Agreement (the TRIPS Agreement) and Public Health—the issue of how countries with insufficient or no manufacturing capacity in the pharmaceutical sector can make effective use of the compulsory licensing provisions within the WTO TRIPS Agreement.

The Decision effectively extends to countries with minimal or no domestic manufacturing capacity the existing flexibility within the TRIPS Agreement to issue compulsory licenses by allowing other countries to produce and export to them. The original TRIPS Agreement allowed for compulsory licensing only where such licensing was primarily for domestic use.

We are currently considering with our European partners how best to implement the new Decision both at EU and at UK level. Beyond our own implementation, we will monitor the wider implementation of the Decision in due course in order to ensure that the Decision is implemented effectively and delivers the intended benefits to developing countries. However, it is too early to make a substantive assessment of the benefits achieved to date for developing countries from the new Decision.

In the context of implementing the new Decision, the Government has supported the principle that pharmaceutical companies in developed countries should be able to act as suppliers under the new arrangements—which would include the export of drugs for life-threatening diseases to least-developed countries—if they so choose.

HIPC Initiative

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development which countries taking part in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative have reached completion point within the timescale established at their decision point. [147391]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: When the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative was launched in 1999, the fixed three-year performance period of the original HIPC framework was replaced by a 'floating' Completion Point. This means that Completion Point is triggered by the successful implementation of a set of pre-defined reform measures, rather than a set period of time. The Decision Point documents for HIPC countries give a prediction of when a country is expected to meet the floating Completion Point triggers, but these time-scales are intended to be only rough estimates. Of the nine countries that have reached Completion Point, only two (Mauritania and Uganda) did so at the date that had been predicted. Two further countries (Tanzania and Mozambique) reached Completion Point within five months of the date predicted at Decision Point. The remaining five countries (Mali, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso and Guyana) missed their predicted Completion Point date by at least a year. Delay in reaching Completion Point is mostly due to poor policy performance. It should be noted, however, that there has been no delay to delivery of relief, as countries cease to make payments on their debt from Decision Point.

Special and Differential Treatment

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had since 17 September 2003 with *(a)* the World Trade Organisation, *(b)* the European Commission and *(c)* the United States about the use of special and differential treatment. [146585]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I have been asked to reply.

It is important that WTO rules more fully reflect different WTO Members' implementation capacities and stages of development. We are therefore disappointed at the lack of progress which has been made in addressing Special and Differential Treatment issues post-Doha.

We had hoped to see agreement in Cancun to at least an initial package of measures, however limited, which might then have opened the way to a wider dialogue on Special and Differential Treatment within the WTO, perhaps through the creation of an expert working group. In the event, no such package of measures

was agreed and no progress made on establishing a wider dialogue, through an expert working group or otherwise.

We will continue to press the case for appropriate Special and Differential Treatment within the WTO system with all relevant interlocutors.

Zimbabwe

Ms Keeble: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment has been made of the impact on health standards of the strike by doctors and nurses in Zimbabwe. [146756]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: Even before the doctors and nurses went on strike three months ago, the coverage and quality of health services in Zimbabwe were being compromised by severe shortages of skilled doctors, nurses, and other professional staff. Declining numbers due to AIDS mortality and migration has led to vacancy rates of 40 per cent. for nurses, 55 per cent. for doctors, and 90 per cent. for pharmacists. Those who remained saw their standard of living drastically eroded by inflation, which now stands at 700 per cent. per annum.

During the doctors' and nurses' strike the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare attempted to limit damage by deploying military medical personnel and Cuban doctors. The doctors' strike came to an end early this month when substantial increases in salaries and allowances were agreed.

The health impacts of the strike and the ongoing human resources crisis have not been quantified, but recent trends in health status in Zimbabwe are alarming. In less than 10 years, life expectancy at birth declined from 50 to less than 35 years, and mortality among children under five rose by more than 50 per cent. HIV prevalence is currently 25 per cent. among those aged 15–49 years. There are over 3000 AIDS-related deaths per week, and more than half a million children have been orphaned by AIDS.

Ms Keeble: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment has been made of the request by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs for non-food aid for Zimbabwe. [146757]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recently released an update on the UN Consolidated Appeals Process in Southern Africa. DFID agrees with OCHA's assessment that while food shortages remain the most immediate humanitarian concern in Zimbabwe, other factors affecting and threatening the basic needs of the Zimbabwean people should not be underestimated or neglected. These include the crippling effect of HIV/AIDS on households and communities, the lack of agricultural inputs, and the rapid decline of basic social services such as health care and education.

DFID is committing approximately £35 million to Zimbabwe this financial year in support of both food and non-food initiatives through UN agencies and other channels. Approximately £28 million is going towards humanitarian relief programmes, including some support to subsistence farmers to enable them to plant food crops to feed themselves, and the provision of safe and clean water to vulnerable urban populations. Our other main programmes help to tackle the HIV/AIDS crisis, and support the health sector. No funding goes through the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure the funds are not abused.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Car Theft

Mr. Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases involving the theft of *(a)* vehicles and *(b)* property from vehicles were reported during December 2003 in each of the Park and Ride car parks operated under the auspices of the Department of Regional Development in the Belfast area. [147044]

Mr. Spellar: I have asked the Chief Executive of Roads Service to write to the hon. Gentleman in response to this question. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Costello Report

David Burnside: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will publish the Costello report on the future selection and transfer procedure between primary and secondary education in Northern Ireland. [147234]

Jane Kennedy: The Costello report deals with many complex issues and I am giving it careful consideration. I will make an announcement as soon as possible about the publication of the report and the shape of future transfer and post primary arrangements.

Dental Care

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dental practices in each Northern Ireland health authority area have ceased providing general dental services in each year since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [147383]

Angela Smith: The information requested is not available. The Department will be developing a new strategy for primary care dentistry, taking account of the recent reviews of the Dental Workplace and the Community Dental Service, and an important part of any new system of delivery will be to ensure that patients are able to access health service dental care.

Motorsport Circuit

David Burnside: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on publicly funded support for a motorsport circuit for Northern Ireland. [R] [146647]

Angela Smith: Publicly funded support for a motorsport circuit for Northern Ireland must be considered in the context of the development of motorsports in Northern Ireland.

Responsibility for the development of motorsports in Northern Ireland rests with the relevant governing bodies as represented by the 2&4 Wheel Motorsport Steering Group Ltd. This Group is currently engaged in

an 'Expressions of Interest' exercise in relation to the development of motorsports facilities, including the possibility of a regional motorsports facility. It would be premature to comment on funding implications in advance of the completion of this exercise.

CABINET OFFICE

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire: and if he will make a statement; [146868]

(2) what assessment his Office has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Office to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146897]

(3) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in the Office to the regions; and if he will make a statement; [146928]

(4) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Government's ability to meet *(a)* their policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements. [146987]

Mr. Alexander: I refer my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North to the answer that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury gave on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Illegal Drugs

Paul Flynn: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether his Strategy Unit has produced reports in the last two years on a strategy for reducing harm resulting from the use of illegal drugs. [146752]

Mr. Alexander: The Strategy Unit has been working closely with the Home Office and other key Departments in undertaking a study on high-harm-causing drugs.

The study is a review of the impact of interventions on the drug supply chain from international production to distribution within the UK.

The study will report privately to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

House Tours

38. **Judy Mallaber:** To ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, representing the House of Commons Commission what plans he has to improve access for tours of the House by constituents. [147113]

Sir Archy Kirkwood: A detailed report on the first year of operations since the introduction of the Central Tours Office and the new sitting hours in January last year is being prepared for the Administration Committee. The Committee will consider the report, taking into account views expressed by Members, and will then advise the Commission.

SCOTLAND

Oil and Gas Industry

6. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the impact of the North Sea oil and gas industry on the Scottish economy. [146396]

Mr. Darling: The Government recognise the continuing vital role of the North Sea oil and gas industry for the Scottish economy and to the UK as a whole in terms of jobs, investment and its contribution to the national income.

Cannabis

7. **Mr. Tynan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Executive regarding the reclassification of cannabis. [146397]

Mrs. McGuire: The legislation governing the classification of drugs is reserved to the UK Government and is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The Home Office is working closely with the Scottish Executive to ensure a coordinated approach to the reclassification of cannabis, which will take effect from 29 January.

Elections

8. **Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the findings of the Electoral Commission in its report on elections in Scotland. [146398]

Mrs. McGuire: I met, in November, the Chairman of the Electoral Commission who briefed me on the official report on last year's Scottish Parliament and local government elections. I very much welcome this report. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, will consider very carefully all of the recommendations made by the Commission.

Pensioners (Means-tested Benefits)

9. **Angela Watkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pensioner households in Scotland are in receipt of means-tested benefits. [146399]

Mr. Darling: The latest figure indicates that 320,000 pensioners are receiving income-related benefits in Scotland.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pensioner households in Scotland are in receipt of means-tested benefits. [147711]

Mrs. McGuire: The latest figure indicates that 320,000 pensioners in Scotland are receiving income-related benefits.

Fisheries Council

10. **Sir Archy Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the outcome of last month's EU Fisheries Council and its consequences for the North Sea fleet in Scotland. [146400]

Mrs. McGuire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to his question on 8 January. He may also like to refer to the record of a statement in the Scottish Parliament made by Mr. Ross Finnie MSP on 7 January.

Civil Service Jobs (Dispersal)

11. **Mr. MacDonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent steps the Government has taken to promote the dispersal of civil service jobs from central London to Scotland. [146401]

Mr. Darling: I am determined that Scotland will continue to get its fair share of posts created by UK Departments or dispersed from London, and I have encouraged Cabinet colleagues to consider what Scotland has to offer when they are reviewing relocation options.

Defence Establishments

12. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the contribution of defence establishments in Scotland to the economy of Scotland. [146402]

Mrs. McGuire: While my right hon. Friend and I are well aware that defence establishments make a significant contribution to the Scottish economy, such assessments are a matter for the Secretary of State for Defence and the Scottish Executive.

Type 45 Destroyers

13. **John Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has *(a)* received from stakeholders in Scotland and *(b)* made to the Ministry of Defence in connection with the orders for Type 45 destroyers. [146403]

Mr. Darling: I have neither received nor made any specific representations in connection with the Type 45 destroyer programme.

Defence White Paper

14. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent meetings he has had with the Scottish Executive on the economic impact on Scotland of the Defence White Paper. [146404]

Mr. Darling: I regularly meet Ministers in the Scottish Executive to discuss a range of issues, including the Scottish economy.

Innovation and Enterprise

15. **Mr. Luke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on innovation and enterprise in Scotland. [146405]

Mrs. McGuire: Innovation and enterprise are at the heart of productivity growth and social gain. Scotland has gained an international reputation as a centre of innovation and expertise in life sciences and other technologies.

The Chancellor's recent pre-Budget report announced a number of measures, which build on existing programmes to promote innovation and enterprise in Scotland and across the UK. These include a widening of the eligibility for research and development tax credits, reforms to reduce the regulatory burden on enterprise and measures to overcome barriers facing small business when raising finance.

Art Acquisition

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department has spent on the acquisition of works of art in each year since 1997, broken down by amounts spent on *(a)* paintings and *(b)* sculpture; what the single most expensive piece of art purchased by his Department since 1997 was; how much it cost; and what the total revenue raised by his Department through sales of its works of art has been since 1997. [142362]

Mrs. McGuire: The Scotland Office was established on 1 July 1999.

Since that date, the office has spent £3,055 on works of art. The most expensive item cost £720. No works of sculpture have been acquired and no departmental-owned works of art have been sold during this period.

Departmental Identity Cards

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the implications of the introduction of compulsory identity cards for his Department. [144557]

Mrs. McGuire: I do not consider that the introduction of a national identity card scheme will have any particular implications for the Scotland Office. Decisions on the use of identity cards to access devolved services in Scotland will be a matter for the Scottish Executive.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of staff in his Department contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143901]

Mrs. McGuire: A small number of staff in the Scotland Office currently contribute just over £200 per month to charities through the Give As You Earn scheme. Further details cannot be provided so as to protect the privacy of the individuals concerned.

Information about the Give As You Earn scheme is available on the departmental intranet site and periodic reminders are issued about the facility. Staff may, of course, make donations to charities by other means.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Airwave Police Radio System

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from *(a)* the Essex Police Authority and *(b)* others on funding by the Home Office for the Airwave radio system; and what changes have been made in the level of funding to be made available for the system in Essex. [146626]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* Essex Police Authority and several other Forces have written about funding of their 2004–05 costs for optional services over and above the basic service. The Home Office is currently establishing the funding needs for each force and will inform Essex Police Authority of changes to its settlement in the near future.

Arson

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many instances of arson there have been in England and Wales in each of the last five years. [146421]

Ms Blears: The available information is given in the table.

Number of offences of arson recorded by the police in England and Wales

	Number
1998–99[1]	47,273
1999–2000	53,794
2000–01	52,818
2001–02[2]	60,470
2002–03[2]	53,200

[1] There was a change of counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998, which had the effect of increasing the number of crimes counted. Numbers of offences for years before and after this date are therefore not directly comparable.
[2] The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced across England and Wales in April 2002. Some police forces adopted the standard prior to this date. Broadly, the NCRS had the effect of increasing the number of crimes recorded by the police. Therefore, following the introduction of the standard numbers of recorded crimes are not comparable with previous years.

Ball Bearing Guns

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce measures to deal with the use of ball bearing guns in public; and if he will make a statement. [146764]

Caroline Flint: Under the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 it will be an offence to have an imitation firearm in a public place without reasonable excuse. We expect this provision to come into force on 20 January. The issue of controls on imitation firearms will be dealt with in the review of firearms legislation which I intend to launch shortly.

Boris Berezovsky

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of police investigations into the claims made during the hearing of the extradition case against Boris Berezovsky that an assassin had been sent from Russia to attack him. [146730]

Ms Blears: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the Metropolitan Police Service was made aware of an alleged threat to Boris Berezovsky. Inquiries made were unable to either substantiate this information or find evidence of any criminal offences having been committed. Investigations into this matter have been concluded.

Community Support Officers

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many community support officers will be in post in the London borough of Sutton by the end of March 2004. [146000]

Ms Blears: The allocation of Community Support Officers (CSOs) within the Metropolitan Police Service is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

The Commissioner has informed me that he plans to deploy 17 CSOs in Sutton by the end of March 2004.

Crime Reduction Initiatives

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding has been made available to local communities to support interventions that *(a)* disrupt local drug markets by tackling both the supply and demand, *(b)* tackle drug-related crime and *(c)* address associated anti-social behaviour in (i) Middlesbrough South and Cleveland, East (ii) the North East and (iii) England. [144753]

Caroline Flint: In December 2002, the Government announced in the Updated Drug Strategy substantial direct annual spending to tackle drug misuse. Details are set out in the following table.

£ million

	2003–04	*2004–05*	*2005–06*
Protecting young people	149	155	163
Reducing supply	380	380	380
Safeguarding communities[1]	212	297	367
Drug treatment[2]	503	512	573
Total	1,244	1,344	1,483

[1] Includes expenditure strengthening delivery.
[2] Includes mainstream spending, prison treatment and pooled budgets.

Regional breakdowns of financial allocations to local communities are not available in the form requested. However the table shows funding streams allocated directly to the Drug Action Teams in Middlesbrough, and in Redcar and Cleveland.

Regional funding 2003–04

£

	Middlesbrough allocation	*Redcar and Cleveland allocation*
DAT Development Funding	35,000	34,000
Pooled Treatment Budget	1,113,000	765,000
Throughcare and Aftercare	133,000	35,000
Capacity Building Funding	350,000	—

In addition to this, national funding provided to, for example, the Police, Probation and Prison Services, is used to tackle the drug-related issues in question.

A breakdown of direct allocations by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships against drug-related anti-social behaviour is not available.

Department Policies

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the impact of his Department's policies on the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington North since 1997. [145422]

Ms Blears: Most of the policies initiated by the Home Office since 1997 have had an impact on the Regent's Park and Kensington North constituency as on other parts of the country. Our policies in the areas of crime reduction, anti-social behaviour and policing are providing direct benefits to the people of Regent's Park and Kensington North.

It is not possible to give details back to 1997, but policies and initiatives in recent years in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) areas of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster have included:

Crime Reduction Initiatives

Initiatives that have been funded in Kensington and Chelsea and City of Westminster for crime reduction purposes (total amount of funding awarded).

Name of initiative	*Year*	*City of Westminster (£)*	*Kensington and Chelsea (£)*
CCTV—Round 1	2000–03	1,205,000	117,000
CCTV—Round 2	2001–03	65,738	281,000
Reducing burglary initiative	2002–03	—	59,582
Communities against drugs	2001–02	277,800	199,400
	2002–03	956,047	199,400
Safer communities initiative	2002–03	162,581	96,144
Partnership development fund (PDF)	2001–02	—	12,500
Small retailers in deprived areas (SRDA)	2003–04	21,023	21,023
Building safer communities fund (BSC)	2003–04	455,792	304,805
Basic command unit fund (BCU)	2003–04	433,000	232,000

Interventions funded by crime reduction allocations included:

Westminster: CCTV cameras and a mobile CCTV system, an initiative to tackle drug related crime from a health, community and environmental angle, street wardens and action against drugs.

Kensington and Chelsea: CCTV in North Kensington crime hot spots and purchase of a mobile CCTV van, tackling vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the Delgarno Neighbourhood, a hardening and repair of burgled properties initiative, action against drugs aimed at young people, community outreach on domestic violence and youth diversion programmes.

Statistics published on the Metropolitan police website show a fall in crime over the past year.

Street Crime

The Metropolitan police service has been part of the street crime initiative since its launch in March 2002. Westminster is one of the priority London street crime boroughs. There were 1,752 robberies in Westminster during 2002–03, a reduction of 36.6 per cent. on 2001–02. In Kensington and Chelsea there were 673 robberies in 2002–03, a reduction of 43.4 per cent. on 2001–02. Overall robbery reduced in London by 21 per cent. comparing 2002–03 with 2001–02.

Positive Action for Young People (PAYP)

Central London Connexions was launched in June 2002, following a pilot period. Connexions has provided considerable support to help young people in the Regent's Park and Kensington North area to participate and achieve in education, employment and training in partnership with youth services, schools, colleges and other providers. Personal advisers (PAs) are placed in many voluntary and statutory youth clubs providing support to young people including music, art and sports projects, and through PAs in detached youth work teams.

PAYP programmes have been particularly successful on Regent's Park and Delgarno estates.

From April to September 2003, across the boroughs of Camden, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster, 11,341 interventions took place with young people through Connexions support to approximately 6,000 young people. An additional 7,184 young people took part in PAYP activities in the area.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Westminster: The City of Westminster was granted £25,000 in 2002–03 for a designated controlled drinking areas scheme.

Kensington and Chelsea: In 2003–04, funding of £22,414 has been allocated from the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit to enable the CDRP to commence recruitment of an anti-social behaviour (ASB) specialist.

Remaining funds will be used to contribute towards the development of a web-based anti-social behaviour case tracking tool.

Policing

Government grant (excluding targeted initiatives) for the Metropolitan police force for 2003–04 is £1,764.05 million, an increase of 5.2 per cent. or £87.73 million over 2002–03.

On top of this, the Metropolitan police will benefit from a number of targeted initiatives, set out in the table:

Metropolitan police funding— selected specific grants

£ million

	2001–02	*2002–03*	*2003–04*	*Total*
Crime fighting fund	43.05	65.89	70.46	179.4
Community support officers	—	8	15	23
Airwave	—	45.69	15.02	60.71
Street crime	—	14.20	8.01	22.21

In addition, the Metropolitan police will also receive in 2003–04:

£41.24 million in capital funding in 2003–04, plus up to £40 million capital funds for the C3i project.

The force has also benefited from extra funding for DNA work—around £9.3 million this year.

£0.20 million from the premises improvement fund.

£62.0 million funding for counter-terrorism—£15.0 million for community support officers and £47.0 million towards the wider counter-terrorism programme.

Between 1997 and 2003, the number of police officers in the Metropolitan police force increased from 26,677 to 28,845.

The introduction of community support officers (CSOs) in 2002 is helping to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on the streets.

Regent's Park and Kensington North constituency is served by two Operational Command Units (OCUs). Borough of Camden OCU covers Regent's Park. It will have a total of 38 CSOs by the end of March 2004. The OCU of Kensington and Chelsea (of which Kensington North form only a part) will have a total of 42 CSOs by the end of March 2004.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Community Safety Team has allocated an additional 10 CSOs for 2004–05 for the St. Charles Ward in North Kensington. Funding for this has come from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

Drug Crime

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent reports his Department has evaluated on methods to reduce drug crime. [146753]

Caroline Flint: As part of the Criminal Justice Interventions Programme, the Government keep the evidence on effective means of tackling drug related crime (both in the UK and abroad) under constant review.

The Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate has, in the past, undertaken evaluations of initiatives designed to reduce drug related crime, and research reports relating to Drug Testing (and Drug Treatment and Testing Orders), Arrest Referral and prisoners' drug treatment have been published by the Department over the past two years.

Forensic Science Service

Laura Moffatt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the Forensic Science Service is contracted out to private operators. [146537]

Ms Blears: The Forensic Science Service (FSS) does not contract out work undertaken in provision of forensic science services to the police service and law enforcement agencies to private operators. The FSS uses private operators solely for the supply of non-scientific support services unrelated to forensic sciences.

Mr. Best: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department where, and for how long, DNA samples are held by the Forensic Science Service. [146203]

Ms Blears: Retention periods depend on the purpose for which the sample was taken, and are as follows:

Crime scene samples on unsolved cases may be kept indefinitely, especially for the more serious cases. For crime scene samples on solved cases the usual retention period is seven years, but it may be up to 30 years for serious crimes in case of a possible miscarriage of justice.

Following amendment of Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 by the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 samples of suspects can now be held indefinitely.

Where individuals have volunteered to provide a sample for intelligence purposes these may also be retained indefinitely provided the individual has given their written consent for its retention.

In all cases samples are either stored by the Forensic Science Service (FSS) laboratory that dealt with the case or in the FSS central archive in Birmingham.

Gun Crime

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of gun crimes was drug-related in the last year for which figures are available. [146833]

Caroline Flint: Statistics on the proportion of gun crime which is drugs-related are not collected centrally.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been *(a)* cautioned and *(b)* prosecuted for possession of (i) unlicensed firearms and (ii) shotguns in each of the last five years; in how many instances in each case the offence was limited to possession and not connected with the weapon's use in other crimes; and how many cases related to failure to renew the appropriate certificate. [147397]

Caroline Flint *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The available information is given in the following table. The statistics collected centrally do not enable those offences limited to possession to be distinguished from those connected with the weapon's use in other offences. Nor is it known how many cases related to failure to renew the appropriate certificate.

Persons cautioned and those proceeded against for possession of unlicensed firearms, England and Wales

	Possession of unlicensed firearms		*Possession of unlicensed shotgun*	
	Persons cautioned	*Persons proceeded against*	*Persons cautioned*	*Persons proceeded against*
1998	157	350	243	199
1999	147	316	132	118
2000	149	[1]272	242	[1]109
2001	117	217	233	125
2002	94	254	153	112

[1] Excludes figures for Staffordshire.

Statistics for 2003 will be published in the autumn.

Identity Cards

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure has been allocated for the *(a)* assessment and *(b)* introduction of identity cards in each year from 2003–04 to 2007–08; and if he will make a statement. [146009]

Fiona Mactaggart: In the current financial year, the Home Office budget for work on identity cards, which also includes work on shorter term measures to counter identity fraud, is £2.5 million.

Our current best estimates for the three year set-up costs for a scheme are £36 million, £60 million and £90 million. The timing of this expenditure will depend on Parliament's approval of legislation.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list information technology contracts in his Department with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146195]

Mr. Blunkett: I am unable to provide the hon. Member with a complete answer as central records are not held on the information sought, and to obtain the requested information in the time given would incur disproportionate cost.

I am, however, able to provide the following information on information technology contracts let within the last 10 years originally valued at over £20 million by the Home Office and its Agencies (Prison Service, Forensic Science Service and UK Passport Service):

Contract	*Inception date*	*Fully functional*
1. National Probation Service Information Systems Strategy (NPSIS): implementation of IT infrastructure and casement management applications. Expired.	1994	Infrastructure roll out substantially complete in 2001–2002.
2. NPSIS (National Probation Service Information Systems Strategy): implementation of IT infrastructure and case management applications.	October 2001	Infrastructure service handover December 2001, upgrade schedule for completion mid 2004.
3. Core Home Office infrastructure implementation and services (HOITS)?expired.	August 1994	November 1994
4. Sirius: successor to HOITS infrastructure services and applications (notably correspondence handling, enterprise resource planning (ERP) and electronic data records management (EDRMS).	October 2000	Infrastructure service handover February 2001, correspondence handling complete, ERP and EDRMS in progress.
5. Quantum: Prison Service infrastructure services and applications	February 2000	Infrastructure roll out completed mid 2003, application under redevelopment.
6. Casework Programme: Immigration Service infrastructure services and case management system.	April 1996	Infrastructure service operational. Main casement application failed and superseded.
7. PASS[1]: UK Passport service passport management service.	October 1998	End 1999
8. CRB[1]: Criminal Records Bureau, application management, records checking and disclosure certificate generation services.	August 2000	High level disclosure service started March 2002, low level disclosures pending.

[1] Business service contracts underpinned by IT systems

M6 Toll Road

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who polices the M6 Toll Road; and who is meeting the cost. [146992]

Caroline Flint: The M6 Toll Road is policed by the Central Motorway police group (CMPG), which comprises officers from Staffordshire police, Warwickshire police, West Midlands police, and the West Mercia Constabulary. The cost is met from normal police funds.

Merseyside Crime

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what issues have been specified by Merseyside police as affecting the incidence of *(a)* domestic burglary, *(b)* vehicle crime and *(c)* robbery in their local plan. [146266]

Ms Blears: Merseyside Police's Annual Policing Plan 2003–04 sets out how the force will enhance the use of the National Intelligence Model to target criminals and their networks whose operations have a direct impact on volume crime (burglary, vehicle crime and violent crime, including robbery). Lessons from the street crime initiative have been applied to tackling burglary and vehicle crime. Increased use of police powers to stop and search and targeting known offenders have had a positive impact on both burglary and vehicle crime on Merseyside. In addition, the implementation of new burglary packs issued to officers attending reported burglaries and extra work undertaken by crime scene investigators have contributed to improved performance. Feedback from user satisfaction surveys has also enabled the force to tailor its response to communities' needs.

Merseyside Crime Initiative Unit

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the role and work of the Merseyside Street Crime Initiative Unit. [146239]

Ms Blears: Robbery in Merseyside reduced by 5 per cent. in 2002–03 compared to 2001–02. This has been achieved by effective partnership working across all agencies. Overall strategic management of street crime is by the Multi Agency Group (MAG). At an operational level, this is supported by Joint Agency Groups (JAGs) and the Robbery Reduction Team. In the Robbery Reduction Team police and Crown Prosecution Service are co-located and the Premium Service provided.

National Centre for Policing Excellence

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the National Centre for Policing Excellence. [146262]

Ms Blears: The National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) was launched in April 2003 to increase the professional capacity of the police service. Its functions include delivering training and advice on specialist law enforcement and technical and analytical support in major crime. It also has a major role in formulating national good practice in operational policing and issuing Codes of Practice and Guidance.

In 2002–03, it produced a knowledge map on street robbery which has been available to all forces on the Criminal Justice Extranet. A Code of Practice on the Police Use of Firearms and less lethal weapons was issued at the beginning of December 2003.

Police

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring into force section 25 of the Police Reform Act 2002 handling of complaints. [146172]

Ms Blears: Section 25 of the Police Reform Act has already been enacted and was brought into force (except subsection (4) on 1 October 2002. The intention is that the Secretary of State will be making regulations which will come into force on 1 April 2004.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what means police *(a)* forces and *(b)* authorities seek to develop a clear understanding of the communities they serve. [146263]

Ms Blears: Under section 96 of the Police Act 1996, police authorities have a statutory obligation to consult with their communities. However, recent research conducted by the Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate concluded that there was scope to enhance engagement with communities.

Provision of a citizen focused policing service is a key priority within the National Policing Plan, published in November 2003, and is fundamental to the on-going process and direction of police reform. Building a police service that is responsive to the diverse needs of the communities it serves requires police forces to develop a clear understanding of those communities.

We have invested £1 million in a joint action research project between the Home Office and the Association of Police Authorities to help police authorities and forces engage more effectively with their local communities.

A major consultation exercise on police reform was launched on 4 November 2003 with the publication of "Policing: Building Safer Communities Together". The broad vision behind the paper is to improve community engagement in policing. It is underpinned by the desire to see local communities play a greater role in policing/community safety decisions and solutions in their neighbourhoods.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the police reform programme launched in 2001. [146271]

Ms Blears: The White Paper, Policing a New Century, published in December 2001, set out the Government's intentions for the future of policing in England and Wales. Good progress has been made in implementing the Police Reform Programme. We now have a clear and understood legislative structure in place under the Police Reform Act 2002 to ensure best practice is embedded in the Service through Regulations, Codes of Practice and Guidance, and, linked to that, the ability to direct forces where their performance is consistently poor.

There is now a more clear focus on performance management within the Policing Performance Assessment Framework which is being developed, and the Police Standards Unit is working with forces to improve performance and identify good practice. The National Centre for Policing Excellence was established in April 2003.

As well as record numbers of police officers and police staff, we now have more than 1,900 community support officers (CSO). We have provided the necessary powers for CSOs and police staff to facilitate greater flexibility for forces in the use of resources and to release officers for front line duties. A major pay and conditions package has been implemented to provide a fairer, more flexible and modernised system of pay and rewards.

The second National Policing Plan was published on 4 November 2003 and sets out the Home Secretary's key policing priorities as well as a strategic framework for local policing plans. The first police science and technology strategy, published in January 2003 provides an overarching vision of how we will address not only our immediate policing needs, but also the future capability. We have invested in the use of new technology. DNA matching and Automatic Numberplate Recognition are important tools to achieve greater effectiveness. The National Intelligence Model is becoming embedded in forces, with the aim that all forces are compliant with the common minimum standards by April 2004.

Work is under way to develop leadership and management capacity at all levels in the police service. We are working towards creating the new Police Leadership Centre, which will bring together all the strands of work on police leadership.

Building on these and other successes, we wish to move the reform programme further. On 4 November 2003 we published a consultation document, "Policing: Building Safer Communities Together", in which we set out the broad direction for future reform, aimed particularly at:

- Increasing community engagement.
- Providing greater accountability.
- Improving operational effectiveness in tackling crime, including serious and organised.
- Further modernising the police service.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to close the gap between the best and worst performing police forces. [146274]

Ms Blears: The Home Office's Public Service Agreements commit it to improving the performance of all police forces, including significantly reducing the gap between the best and worst performing forces. The National Policing Plan 2004–07 set out the performance gap target which has been agreed. It is a fixed target requiring each force's performance in reducing crime

and investigating crime to be no more than 10 per cent. below that of the average performance of its Most Similar Force comparators by 2005–06.

All forces are aware of the improvements in performance that are required, and to help police forces and authorities improve police performance and gauge progress, performance data is now available on-line to allow them to access regular updates on performance.

The Police Standards Unit (PSU) is currently working with forces who have been identified as having specific performance problems to help deliver improvements.

Programmes of work are developed in consultation with the force and in liaison with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), and are designed to provide practical help to enhance organisational capacity and capability.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the proportion of time spent on frontline duty by the police has changed in the last five years. [146275]

Ms Blears: This information is not available. However, for the first time, all forces will be contributing data towards the calculation of the amount of time spent by police officers on front line duties for the financial year 2003–04. The results of this will be available later this year.

As indicated in paragraph 2.6 of the National Policing Plan 2004–07, a preliminary assessment of 35 forces outside London for 2002–03 gave an average figure of 61 per cent. This is not a baseline for future years. A number of initiatives are in train including, work force modernisation and reducing bureaucracy that will impact on the amount of time spent on front line policing and the Government look to the police service to ensure the proportion rises.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made of the effect of the work of the steering group reducing bureaucracy in the police force. [146278]

Ms Blears: I receive regular reports on the work of the Steering Group, co-chaired by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Home Office, which was set up to oversee the work on reducing bureaucracy in the police service. Among the achievements since the Group first met in October 2002, the national roll out of the fixed penalty notice scheme is scheduled to be completed by April 2004; there are currently 19 performance indicators compared with 51 in 1997; over 4,600 forms have been made obsolete in 21 forces; approximately 20 forces are using mobile telephones and handheld computers to cut down on the time officers spend returning to the station to fill in forms; and all 43 forces in England and Wales now have the capacity to undertake video identity parades to speed up the identification of suspects. I am looking to the steering group to make further substantial impact in four key areas in particular over the conning months. These are information technology; work force modernisation; efficiency; and frontline policing activity.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to make the police force an attractive career for ethnic minorities. [146279]

Ms Blears: The Government are committed to achieving a culturally diverse work force in the police service that is representative of the local communities it serves. We are engaged with the leadership of the police service in addressing diversity and promoting race equality in the areas of recruitment, training and development and in the conduct of the officers and staff. We support fully the Commission for Racial Equality's investigation of these issues.

The National Recruitment Standards programme includes assessment processes which test candidates' attitudes towards race and diversity vigorously through interviews, role play and written assessment. This should exclude anyone with racist tendencies or those who do not respect differences and diversity. Those who do not score sufficiently highly in respect for race and diversity are not offered a job, irrespective of how well they do in the rest of the selection process. These processes are already in place in a number of forces and will be implemented in the remainder of the service by summer 2004. We assess candidates for unacceptable attitudes in every exercise.

I shall further support this with a new action plan "Breaking Through" which is being launched later this month and which contains a series of actions and examples of promising practice to help forces improve the recruitment, retention and progression of minority ethnic staff.

A new round of the CouldYou Police recruitment campaign has just been launched aimed, in particular, at the recruitment of women and ethnic minorities. The campaign is supported by outreach work pilots in four forces aimed at increasing the interest of ethnic minority communities in the police service as a credible and rewarding career choice.

Fundamental changes to the way in which probationer constables are trained are under way. The focus will be on delivery of practice-based training within the local community rather than in residential police training centres. This new approach is already being piloted in several areas of the country. Improvements are also being made to police training generally to improve awareness of race and diversity issues and increase opportunities for community involvement. There will be rigorous assessment of standards.

There are procedures under the Police Act 1996 and the Police (Misconduct) Regulations 1999 to deal with conduct which falls below the required standard. These procedures can be invoked by way of a complaint from a member of the public or a report or allegation from any other person. This includes any complaint or allegation of racial discrimination or attitudes. The Police Reform Act 2002 introduces a new complaints system to come into force on 1 April 2004, under which serious racial discrimination is a category of a complaint that must be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, which will decide how such a complaint will be dealt with.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the targets are for increasing the number of female officers in the most senior ranks of the police force. [146280]

Ms Blears: There are no targets to increase the number of female officers in the most senior ranks of the Police Service. Proposals for the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (Annex C of the National Policing Plan 2004–07) include measures of overall strength, retention and promotion of female officers.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been conducted on the attitude of the public towards the police, with particular reference to racism. [146273]

Ms Blears: The British Crime Survey and the Home Office Citizenship Survey both ask questions about people's attitudes towards the police and refer to racism. Both surveys establish the ethnic group of the respondents:

The most recent relevant results from the British Crime Survey can be found in: Crime in England and Wales 2001/2002: Supplementary Volume. Chapter 7. (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 01/03, Flood-Page and Matthews 2003).

The most recent relevant results from the Home Office Citizenship Survey can be found in: 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities. Chapters 2 and 3. (Home Office Research Study 270, Attwood et al 2003).

Other Home Office studies, drawing in the perceptions and experiences of the public, have focused on key issues within police-community relations. These include: The Views of the Public on Stops and Searches (Police Research Series paper 129, Stone and Pettigrew 2000);

Attitudes of People from Minority Ethnic Communities towards a Career in the Police Service(Police Research Series paper 136, Stone and Tuffin 2000); and

Public Perceptions of Police Accountability and Decision-making (Home Office On-line Report 38/03, Docking 2003).

The Home Office is also currently carrying out, or has commissioned, further research in this area. These on-going projects seek to: understand the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry on the police; review the impact of police community and race relations training; examine the police handling of racist incidents; and evaluate the phased implementation of the Lawrence recommendation 61 (the recording of police stops).

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of links between an increase in the number of police officers and a reduction in crime. [143403]

Ms Blears: The number of police officers has increased by 7 per cent. from 127,158 in March 1997 to 136,386 in August 2003. Evidence from the British Crime Survey over a similar period (between 1997 and 2002–03) indicates that burglary has fallen by 39 per cent., vehicle crime by 31 per cent., violent crime by 24 per cent. while crime overall declined by 25 per cent.

The Government are committed to maximising the benefits of this increase. Working with the Service and others, a police reform agenda focused on community engagement, greater local accountability, operational effectiveness and workforce modernisation will produce further improvements.

Police Funding (Cumbria)

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Cumbria Police Authority on the 2004–05 Provisional Grant Settlement; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement. [146946]

Ms Blears: We received representations from the Treasurer of Cumbria Police Authority on 22 December. The period of consultation on the provisional settlement closed on 9 January. All representations received will be carefully considered and will be taken into account.

I shall send my right hon. Friend a copy of my reply to Cumbria Police Authority as soon as it is available.

Police Funding (Wales)

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the budgets for each police force in Wales since 1979 adjusted for inflation figures. [143033]

Ms Blears: The available information is set out in the following table.

£000[1]

	Dyfed Powys	*Gwent*	*North Wales*	*South Wales*
1990–1[2, 3]	44,554	47,084	62,966	148,702
1991–92[2]	46,890	48,475	67,099	156,126
1992–93[2]	50,335	50,206	71,907	164,102
1993–94[2]	52,056	51,682	72,853	163,391
1994–95[2]	54,935	52,964	75,505	163,944
1995–96	55,188	59,346	78,755	183,311
1996–97	56,037	72,418	79,992	174,381
1997–98	56,075	72,474	80,044	174,500
1998–99	56,586	73,138	80,774	176,090
1999–2000	59,783	76,628	85,362	182,376
2000–01	62,261	80,309	88,625	188,903
2001–02	64,676	82,979	92,000	194,321
2002–03[4]	65,332	84,396	93,455	195,006
2003–04	69,335	89,520	101,850	195,650

[1] Budgets are shown in real terms using Treasury deflator as at 30 September 2003. 2002–03:100.
[2] Police Authorities in Wales, prior to 1995–96, were not precepting authorities and therefore did not have independent budgets. They received Home Office police grant and levied the rest of the income from their constituent counties. The figures from 1990–91 to 1994–95 represent net current expenditure by police authorities in Wales. Subsequent figures are for police authority budgets.
[3] Figures are not available for individual police authorities on a consistent basis prior to 1990–91.
[4] Budgets for 2002–03 are not directly comparable with 2001–02 owing to changes in funding arrangements for NCS/NCIS, which have been funded centrally rather than locally since 2002–03.
Source:
Welsh Assembly Government.

Recorded Crime

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage recorded crime levels have changed in the past five years. [146270]

Ms Blears: Police recorded crime is affected by changes in recorded practice. Revisions to the Home Office counting rules in April 1998 and the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in April 2002, have resulted in substantially more crimes being recorded. This is because more categories of crime have

been introduced into the coverage of recorded crime, and the police are now recording a higher proportion of crimes reported to them.

When factoring out these changes in order to produce a fairer like-for-like comparison, total recorded crime remained broadly unchanged between 1997–98 and 2002–03.

Stoke Heath Young Offenders Institution

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children received into Stoke Heath Young Offenders' Institution in the past year were on the Child Protection Register. [145093]

Paul Goggins: The Local Youth Offending Team is in every case where a child is received into a secure training facility from court required to confirm whether the child's name has been placed on the child protection register. This information assists in the creation of an individual sentence plan.

Figures are not held centrally or collated locally at Stoke Heath Young Offender Institution. Examination of the records of all the young people who have been received into that establishment over the past year could not be undertaken without disproportionate cost.

Terrorism Act

Ross Cranston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been arrested for terrorist offences under the Terrorism Act 2000 since 11 September 2001; and how many of them *(a)* have been charged, *(b)* have been released without charge, *(c)* have been bailed, *(d)* are still in custody, *(e)* were prosecuted in court under the Act, *(f)* were convicted under the Act and *(g)* were handed over to immigration officials. [145921]

Mr. Blunkett: Police records show that since 11 September 2001, 530 people have been arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000 and that 94 of those have been charged with offences under that Act resulting in five convictions to date.

54 people have been released directly into the custody of immigration services. A further 71 of those arrested under the Act have been charged under other legislation.

263 individuals were released without charge or further sanction. Information on any further action taken is not collated centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Young Offenders (Education)

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether children held in segregation units in young offender institutions attend normal classes for education. [145094]

Paul Goggins: All children held in segregation units in young offender institutions are required to be given access to education. They will be given as much access to normal classes as is practicable, taking into account the reasons for their segregation and the risks in each case as well as the facilities and resources available locally.

TRANSPORT

Air Safety

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which airlines were subject during 2003 to safety assessment of foreign aircraft ramp checks by the Civil Aviation Authority acting on their own initiative rather than at the direction of his Department; [147558]

(2) if he will list the UK airports at which safety assessment of foreign aircraft ramp checks were carried out during 2003, indicating the number of aircraft checked at each airport; [147559]

(3) what criteria are used by his Department when deciding which foreign airlines and aircraft should be subject to safety assessment of foreign aircraft ramp checks; [147560]

(4) how many safety assessment of foreign aircraft ramp checks have been carried out at UK airports on behalf of his Department in each of the last five years. [147561]

Mr. McNulty: The Civil Aviation Authority carry out a programme of ramp inspections on the Department's behalf. We discuss that programme regularly with the Authority advising them of any information we have about potential safety concerns relating to particular aircraft, foreign airlines or the oversight provided by foreign regulatory authorities. The Authority organises visits to airports to maximise the number of inspections they can carry out, taking account of priorities as they arise; during such visits the Authority may inspect any aircraft which gives ground for concern. The Authority also makes specific visits for inspections of particular flights when requested to do so.

Inspections are carried out at the most appropriate airport, taking into account the routes operated by the airlines concerned. In 2003, inspections took place at the following airports:

Airport	*Number of safety inspections*
Birmingham	1
Bournemouth	1
Bristol	8
Cardiff	1
East Midlands	2
Edinburgh	1
Exeter	9
Filton	1
Glasgow	3
Liverpool	1
London City	12
London Gatwick	51
London Heathrow	76
London Luton	11
London Stansted	17

Airport	Number of safety inspections
Manchester	13
Mansion	2
Norwich	2
Prestwick	1

Note:
These figures include 10 inspections of corporate and privately operated aircraft.

I refer to my answer to the hon. Member of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 499W, which lists those airlines which have had permits to operate to the UK refused or suspended. In the case of other airlines we have not had the need to suspend or restrict permits and therefore it would not be appropriate to publish their names.

The number of inspections carried out on aircraft operated by foreign airlines in the last five years is as follows:

	Number of Inspections
1999	103
2000	256
2001	221
2002	193
2003	203

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the foreign airlines that are not banned from UK airspace but are banned from airspace elsewhere in Europe, indicating *(a)* where, *(b)* when and *(c)* for what reason these bans operated; and whether any of these airlines have operated in UK airspace while banned elsewhere; [147567]

(2) pursuant to his answers of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 429–30W, on British airspace, whether the standards that have to be met for the issue of a permit to operate a foreign aircraft in UK airspace are above the minimum required by the International Civil Aviation Organisation; [147568]

(3) on British airspace, if he will list the foreign airlines that would be banned from UK airspace if they were to apply for a permit; [147570]

(4) on British airspace, which foreign airlines would have had their applications for a permit turned down had they made one since January 2000. [147571]

Mr. McNulty: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 12 January 2004. *Official Report*, columns 545–46W, given to the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (John Thurso). This explains the basis on which international civil aviation is governed and the conditions on which UK permits are issued to foreign airlines. That answer also explains why we are not able to give detailed information on permit action taken elsewhere in Europe.

Each application for a permit is considered on its merits and we could not prejudge our reaction to applications that foreign airlines might make in the future. There are a variety of reasons why permits have been refused, suspended or revoked and a range of permit restrictions possible, as demonstrated in the list included in the answer I gave the hon. Member on 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 429W. The decisions not to allow services under the safety supervision of Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Liberia and Tajikistan to operate to the UK were taken on the basis of information received about the ability of the aeronautical authorities of those countries to oversee the safety of their airlines and/or aircraft on their register. Those concerns continue, but we would be prepared to reconsider our position in the light of any additional information.

In the case of Gambia, we have issued a permit to Gambian International Airlines but only on the basis that the airline contracts with an acceptable non-Gambian airline to provide the aircraft and crew and to operate the flights on its behalf (called wet-leasing). In this case it has wet-leased an aircraft from Futura of Spain, and the Spanish authorities retain responsibility for the safety and operation of the aircraft.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the foreign airlines whose aircraft have been subject to one or more safety assessment of foreign aircraft ramp checks during each of the past five years indicating how many aircraft of each airline were tested. [147569]

Mr. McNulty: The Civil Aviation Authority carry out a programme of ramp inspections on the Department's behalf. We discuss that programme regularly with the Authority advising them of any information we have about potential safety concerns relating to particular aircraft, foreign airlines or the oversight provided by foreign regulatory authorities. The Authority organises visits to airports to maximise the number of inspections they can carry out, taking account of priorities as they arise; during such visits the Authority may inspect any aircraft which gives ground for concern. The Authority also makes specific visits for inspections of particular flights when requested to do so.

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Airport	Number of safety inspections
Birmingham	1
Bournemouth	1
Bristol	8
Cardiff	1
East Midlands	2
Edinburgh	1
Exeter	9
Filton	1
Glasgow	3
Liverpool	1
London City	12
London Gatwick	51
London Heathrow	76
London Luton	11
London Stansted	17
Manchester	13
Mansion	2
Norwich	2
Prestwick	1

These figures include 10 inspections of corporate and privately operated aircraft.

I refer to my answer to the hon. Member of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 499W, which lists those airlines which have had permits to operate to the UK refused or suspended. In the case of other airlines we have not had the need to suspend or restrict permits and therefore it would not be appropriate to publish their names.

The number of inspections carried out on aircraft operated by foreign airlines in the last five years is as follows:

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2003	203

Buses

Joyce Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, at constant prices, the spending on public transport support for buses for each year since 1985 in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* English metropolitan areas outside London, *(e)* shire counties and *(f)* London. [147420]

Mr. McNulty: The information, in constant 2002–03 prices, is shown in the following table.

£ million

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*English Met areas*	*English shire counties*	*London*
1985–86	841	50	22	406	170	264
1986–87	677	58	17	329	143	205
1987–88	526	38	14	218	122	187
1988–89	498	34	12	182	127	189
1989–90	408	24	13	152	128	128
1990–91	423	17	13	139	128	155
1991–92	486	26	13	146	131	209
1992–93	472	26	13	140	119	213
1993–94	307	27	11	126	107	74
1994–95	297	27	10	123	107	67
1995–96	259	30	11	119	104	35
1996–97	233	31	10	123	97	14
1997–98	209	26	11	111	97	1
1998–99	255	25	12	121	121	13
1999–2000	263	27	14	116	136	11
2000–01	353	29	16	125	142	87
2001–02	458	33	17	123	145	190
2002–03[1]	618	32	17	121	142	355

[1] Provisional.

Joyce Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has collated on the change in the number of passenger journeys by bus for each year since 1985 in each English metropolitan area outside London. [147421]

Mr. McNulty: The information is shown in the following table.

Million

	Tyne and Wear	*West Yorkshire*	*South Yorkshire*	*Merseyside*	*Greater Manchester*	*West Midlands*
1985–86	287	291	341	305	357	487
1986–87	257	304	268	258	267	456
1987–88	243	297	237	219	310	426
1988–89	247	296	225	207	297	422
1989–90	244	294	192	211	291	417
1990–91	230	263	191	191	270	403
1991–92	220	240	177	191	260	389
1992–93	189	231	176	178	252	356
1993–94	182	232	166	166	236	355
1994–95	170	222	163	168	226	381
1995–96	168	219	158	165	224	358
1996–97	165	207	150	163	212	349
1997–98	161	196	144	151	211	368
1998–99	154	186	135	150	217	353
1999–2000	151	180	130	149	199	353
2000–01	146	189	131	142	204	353
2001–02	141	181	128	142	205	352
2002–03[1]	138	181	128	144	209	350

[1] Provisional

Motorways

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in respect of each motorway the number of occasions in each of the last five years when a carriageway has been closed for more than two hours as a result of *(a)* an accident and *(b)* an incident other than an accident. [145529]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* The information requested has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Commercial Vehicle Parking

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the availability of overnight parking facilities for commercial vehicles in each region of the UK. [147330]

Mr. Jamieson: The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 confers powers on local authorities to make provision for on and off street parking facilities, including facilities for commercial vehicles if these are considered necessary. We have not commissioned any research to

evaluate the availability of overnight parking facilities for commercial vehicles. However, the Highways Agency is engaged in a pilot study in conjunction with the road haulage industry aimed at providing dedicated rest areas for lorry drivers away from the motorway network.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146862]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146878]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146891]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146922]

Mr. McNulty: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146907]

Mr. McNulty: The latest available figures for the number of staff in the Department for Transport that work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire is shown in the following table:

Location	*Number of staff*
West Midlands	1,127
North Staffordshire	38
Total	1,165

Lane Rental Trials

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the Government intends to consult interested parties on next steps when the lane rental trials in Camden and Middlesbrough end. [147095]

Mr. Jamieson: The lane rental trials in Camden and Middlesbrough are due to end on 31 March. Any decision on whether to roll out lane rental more widely will need to be taken in the context of changes to the existing legislative regime for utility street works resulting from the Traffic Management Bill, including the introduction of permit schemes. We intend consulting widely with utilities, local authorities, utility regulators and other interested parties when drawing up regulations which would allow for permit schemes, and we would consult similarly widely before extending lane rental.

M5

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the resurfacing schedule for the M5; and what account it takes of requests to deal with excessive noise nuisance. [146477]

Mr. Jamieson: Resurfacing schedules are established on an annual basis, based upon an assessment of surface condition and availability of funds. Next year's resurfacing will be determined as part of the Highways Agency's business plan development.

The 10 Year Plan for Transport includes a commitment to use quieter surfacing materials where possible during routine resurfacing. Other noise reduction measures, such as noise fencing, are considered on an individual basis.

Railways

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much public subsidy was given to each railway company in each year since 1997. [146536]

Mr. McNulty: Details of the subsidy paid to each train operating company, in each year, are set out in the Strategic Rail Authority's annual report, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the projected investment in rail infrastructure is in Scotland over the next five years. [147685]

Mr. McNulty: Network Rail's June 2003 Business Plan sets out £1.6 billion of investment in maintenance and renewals for Scottish routes (excluding the West Coast Main Line and East Coast Main Line in Scotland) over the period 2004–05 to 2008–09. The Business Plan is currently being reviewed to take into account the Rail Regulator's Final Conclusions on the Interim Review of Track Access Charges, which were published on 12 December 2003. The SRA's investment proposals are set out in the Strategic Plan. The latest edition was published last year and is available in the House Library. In addition, the Scottish Executive may facilitate the development and improvement of passenger rail services.

Scotrail

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government funding is provided to Scotrail in 2003–04 in respect of its sleeper services to London. [147686]

Mr. McNulty: This is a matter for the Scottish Executive, which is responsible for the franchise arrangements for cross-border sleeper services.

Speed Cameras

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much of the money raised in fines by the Essex Safety Camera Partnership was spent on traffic-calming measures and other safety projects in Essex,

other than the installation and operating of speed cameras, in each of the last six years for *(a)* Billericay and district, *(b)* Basildon district and *(c)* Essex; and what percentage this represented of the total money raised in fines for each year. [147564]

Mr. Jamieson: Fine revenue from the cost recovery system can only be used to fund safety camera operations and not for any other purposes. Other funding sources are available to local authorities to use on other road safety measures.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many speed enforcement cameras have been *(a)* removed, *(b)* relocated and *(c)* disabled as a result of his recent letter to safety camera partnerships; and if he will place a copy of his letter in the Library. [147757]

Mr. Jamieson: The letter from the Department for Transport to the partnerships, dated 19 December, was sent by the Head of Road Safety Division. It asked partnerships to confirm that they are adhering strictly to the guidance and rules of the safety camera netting off arrangement in siting the cameras and ensuring all requirements relating to speed limit setting and signing are in place. I shall keep the House informed.

A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer of 22 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 52W, if he will set out in respect of each safety camera partnership the last quarter for which monitoring information and data has been received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* its consultants; and if he will place a copy in the Library. [147759]

Mr. Jamieson: The results of the last complete year's monitoring to 31 March 2003 will be contained in the next annual report of the safety camera programme that is due to be published in March and will be placed in the Library of the House.

Traffic Management Bill

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is the policy of the Government that traffic officers appointed under the Traffic Management Bill should be subject to positive vetting. [145537]

Mr. Jamieson: The safety and protection of the travelling public is of paramount importance to the Government.

The level of security and criminal record checks that the Highways Agency is expected to apply are equivalent to those that exist for staff currently employed by the Police service, such as Traffic Police and Community Support Officers.

As well as undertaking a check against security service records, the Highways Agency is also in the process of registering with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Registration with the CRB will enable the Agency to pick up all criminal convictions, and carry out checks against relevant departmental and police records.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces Accommodation

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures his Department uses to ensure that service accommodation is managed and maintained to standards that are acceptable to the tenants. [146831]

Mr. Caplin: I refer the hon. Member to the Defence Housing Executive's Key Targets for Financial Year 2003–04, set out in my written ministerial statement of 2 July 2003, *Official Report*, column 19WS. The Key Targets include allocation times, repairs, upgrades and customer satisfaction. Full details are set out in the DHE Corporate Plan 2003, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Army Redress (Appeals)

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the procedures are for *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks in the Army to appeal against army redress decisions; and if he will make a statement. [145730]

Mr. Caplin: The procedures governing appeals against army redress decisions are contained within section 180 of the Army Act 1955, Chapter 5 of Queen's Regulations and Army General and Administrative Instructions, Volume 2, Chapter 70. Officers and other ranks who make a complaint and who do not obtain the redress to which they think they are entitled, may submit their complaint to the Defence Council (the Army Board acting as the Defence Council). The procedures require the complaint to proceed through a series of levels in the chain of command, any of which may resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant, before it is considered by the Defence Council. If officers do not obtain from the Defence Council the redress they seek, they have the further opportunity to require the Defence Council to make a report on the complaint to Her Majesty and she has the power to look into the case further, acting on the advice of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Art Acquisition

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on the acquisition of works of art in each year since 1997, broken down by amounts spent on *(a)* paintings and *(b)* sculpture; what the single most expensive piece of art purchased by his Department since 1997 has been; how much it cost; and what the total revenue raised by his Department through sales of works of art has been since 1997. [142358]

Mr. Caplin: Since 1997 the Ministry of Defence has purchased one painting—a portrait of Admiral Leach, at a cost of £5,000. No works of sculpture have been purchased, and no works of art have been sold.

Cluster Munitions

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the cluster artillery shells purchased from BAE Systems in 2003 have been used; how many remain in storage; and what the period of possible utility is of the unused ones. [146990]

Mr. Ingram: No cluster artillery shells purchased from BAE Systems in 2003 have been used in Iraq during Operation Telic. Shells purchased from BAE Systems have been put into store to maintain operational stock levels. The ammunition used during Operation Telic was from a procurement made in 1996; therefore the full quantity ordered remains in storage. This ammunition has a shelf life of 10 years.

Defence Housing Executive

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recourse is available to armed forces personnel who consider that complaints and problems relating to their accommodation have not been dealt with adequately by the Defence Housing Executive. [147283]

Mr. Caplin: The Defence Housing Executive (DHE) has a 5-step complaints procedure which directs the occupant through the organisation from local DHE office level to the Chief Executive. If still unsatisfied, the occupant can write to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), DHE's owner. This procedure is fully explained in the Occupants Handbook, a copy of which is provided to all occupants of Service family housing.

Serving personnel are also able to raise matters through their chain of command or make a formal complaint under the Service redress of grievance procedure.

The DHE Occupants Handbook also lists bodies that may be consulted for independent advice, such as Citizens' Advice Bureaux and Service welfare organisations. Leaflets containing information about complaints are on display in community facilities in DHE estates, and reminders are published from time to time in DHE's customer magazine 'Living in Families Quarters'.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising was for his Department for each year since 1997. [145673]

Mr. Caplin: Details of the Ministry of Defence's expenditure on advertising and publicity have historically been included in the annual Departmental Performance Reports, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. For 1996–97 the information is shown on page 49 Cm 3781; for 1997–98, the information is shown on page 49, Cm 4170; for 1999–2000 the information is shown on page 60, Cm 5000; for 2000–01 the information is shown on page 68, Cm 5290 and for 2001–02 the information is shown on page 71, Cm 5661.

Figures for 1998–99 were not provided in the Annual Performance Report and are as follows:

Category	*Expenditure (£ million)*
Recruitment	
Royal Navy/Royal Fleet Auxiliary	6.65
Army	11.77
Royal Air Force	10.17
Civilian	3.27
PR, marketing and business support services	0.84
Chief of Public Relations expenditure	2.39
Sales promotion	1.06
Scholarships	0.38
National Employers Liaison Committee (Territorial Army)	1.05

The introduction of Resource Accounting and Budgeting in the Ministry of Defence has changed the way we account for and record our expenditure. I can confirm that the final outturn for publicity and recruitment, which includes advertising, for 2002–03 was £52.5 million. However, the detailed breakdown could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Depleted Uranium Oversight Board

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to reconfigure the Depleted Uranium Oversight Board. [146988]

Mr. Caplin: The Ministry of Defence has no proposals to reconfigure the Depleted Uranium Oversight Board (DUOB).

Flying Hours (RAF Marham)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many hours on average were flown by RAF pilots based at RAF Marham in each month over the past two years [141295]

Mr. Ingram *[pursuant to the answer, 4 December 2003, Official Report, column 127W]:* The information provided was incorrect.

The information in the following table shows the correct number of hours flown on average by pilots based at RAF Marham, by month. These figures include hours flown by exchange pilots from foreign air forces serving with RAF Squadrons based at the station, as these are not recorded separately. On average there are two such pilots at the station, and they would normally fly at the same rate as RAF pilots. The figures also include hours flown by Marham-based pilots deployed on Operation TELIC, hence the increase in April 2003.

Month	*Average hours per pilot*
December 2001	12.02
January 2002	18.54
February 2002	15.14
March 2002	19.24
April 2002	18.49
May 2002	19.46
June 2002	17.75
July 2002	16.23
August 2002	15.85
September 2002	19.36
October 2002	20.51
November 2002	14.53
December 2002	12.63
January 2003	18.16
February 2003	11.27
March 2003	10.66
April 2003	27.43
May 2003	16.10
June 2003	21.39
July 2003	20.41

Month	Average hours per pilot
August 2003	14.03
September 2003	17.80
October 2003	18.19

Future Army Structure

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Future Army Structure. [147726]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the Defence White Paper, 'Delivering Security in a Changing World', published on 11 December 2003, and in particular Chapter 4 'Armed Forces Capabilities', which sets out the latest position on the Future Army Structure.

Iraq

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to ensure the safety of civilian contractors working for the allied forces in Iraq. [145278]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 758W, to the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Rosindell).

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list information technology contracts in his Department with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146189]

Mr. Ingram: This information is not held centrally and could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Jaguar

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to withdraw the RAF's Jaguar aircraft from service. [147282]

Mr. Ingram: Based on current predictions it is expected that the RAF's Jaguar fleet will be retired around the end of this decade.

King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery

Mark Tami: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the operational role is of the King's Troop, the Royal Horse Artillery; [142712]

(2) what the cost to public funds in 2003–04 is of the King's Troop, the Royal Horse Artillery; [142713]

(3) what his plans are for the future of the King's Troop, the Royal Horse Artillery. [142714]

Mr. Ingram: In addition to its ceremonial role, the King's Troop, the Royal Horse Artillery provides personnel to support the Royal Artillery Corps and other units. Most recently, members of the King's Troop deployed with Close Support and Depth Fire Artillery units on Operation Telic. No changes are currently planned to this role.

The cost to public funds in the last financial year (2002–03) was £5.78 million. This includes expenditure on pay, building works, food and clothing.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many parliamentary questions to his Department have waited more than four sitting weeks for a reply in Session 2002–03. [140792]

Mr. Hoon: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, as a guide, officials have calculated a figure based on the number of parliamentary questions tabled between 8 September to 18 September 2003 and 7 October to 20 November 2003. According to our records, 898 parliamentary questions were tabled during this period and of this number, 34 questions were answered more than four sitting weeks later.

Defence Ministers aim to answer named day written questions on the day named and ordinary written questions within five sitting days.

Recruitment (Security Clearance)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were refused security clearance for entry to *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Army in each of the last five years. [147259]

Mr. Ingram: Electronic records capable of showing those refused security clearance for entry to the Services were started during 2001. There is no practical means of obtaining and collating this information for the years prior to 2002. In 2002, six potential Royal Navy recruits, two potential Royal Air Force recruits and 38 potential Army recruits were refused security clearance. In 2003, 11 potential Royal Navy recruits, five potential Royal Air Force recruits and 40 potential Army recruits were refused security clearance.

Sea Harrier

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first Sea Harrier Squadron will be withdrawn from service; and what plans he has for the disposal of the squadron's aircraft. [147281]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 June 2003, *Official Report*, columns 879–80W, to the hon. Member for North Essex (Mr. Jenkin).

The first Sea Harrier Squadron will be withdrawn from service on 31 March 2004.

Service Pensions

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ex-service personnel who are entitled to a preserved pension are not claiming that to which they are entitled. [146957]

Mr. Caplin: The total number of pensions currently in payment under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme is in the region of 342,000 (this includes pensions in payment

to former Service personnel, their spouses and dependants). As at 30 November 2003, 504 ex-service personnel across the three Services have not claimed a preserved pension award to which they were entitled at age 60.

Tornado

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the RAF's last Tornado GR4 aircraft are expected to be retired; what aircraft type is earmarked to replace the Tornado GR4 in its role; and if he will make a statement. [147548]

Mr. Ingram: We currently expect the Tornado GR4 to leave service around the end of the next decade.

The Future Offensive Air System is planned to replace the offensive air capability currently provided by the Tornado GR4. No final decision has been taken on how the Future Offensive Air System requirement might best be met. We are currently looking at a potential mix of platforms including Long Range Cruise Missiles, Uninhabited Combat Air Vehicles and manned aircraft.

Unexploded Cluster Bombs

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much compensation is paid to families of *(a)* adults and *(b)* children under 16 years of age, who are (i) killed and (ii) injured as a result of unexploded British cluster bombs in (A) Kosovo, (B) Afghanistan and (C) Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [146168]

Mr. Ingram: When compensation claims are submitted, they are considered on the basis of whether or not the Ministry of Defence has a legal liability to pay compensation. Where there is a legal liability to pay compensation, we do so. The amount of compensation paid is calculated on the basis of the severity of the injury together with any financial loss. The amount payable for financial loss to an adult would likely exceed that payable to a juvenile.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Judges (Appeals)

27. **Vera Baird:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will make a statement on the number of successful appeals made against individual judges. [147123]

Mr. Leslie: Judicial decisions are not a matter in which the Government should become involved, and the Department for Constitutional Affairs does not routinely monitor the outcome of appeals in relation to decisions made by particular judges. The fact that an appeal has been successful does not in itself entail any criticism of the original judge.

Supreme Court

28. **Mr. Chaytor:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what representations he has received on the proposal for the creation of a supreme court. [147125]

Mr. Leslie: I have received a range of representations on the new Supreme Court in response to the consultation paper issued last July. Details of responses received will be published shortly.

House of Lords

29. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs whether he plans to have further consultation on his proposals for reform of the House of Lords. [147126]

Mr. Leslie: The public consultation on proposals for reform of the House of Lords ended on 12 December, and the responses are being considered. The Government does not intend to repeat this consultation. Beyond this Bill, we have made clear that there is more work to be done.

32. **Kevin Brennan:** To ask the Parliamentary under Secretary of State if he will make a statement on his plans for further reform of the House of Lords. [147129]

Mr. Leslie: The Government intends to introduce legislation to remove the remaining hereditary peers and place the Appointments Commission on a statutory footing as soon as Parliamentary time allows. The Government has repeatedly stated that this Bill does not mark the end of the road for House of Lords reform.

Court of Protection

30. **Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what recent representations he has received about the efficiency of the Court of Protection. [147127]

Mr. Lammy: No representations have been received on the court of Protection, but 26 have been made to my noble Friend Lord Filkin on the Public Guardianship Office, which is the administrative arm of the Court, since he took over ministerial responsibility for it last summer.

Solicitors

31. **David Taylor:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what initiatives are planned to improve the oversight of supervision of solicitors; and if he will make a statement. [147128]

Mr. Lammy: We expect to appoint a Legal Services Complaints Commissioner with powers to oversee the Law Society's complaints handling in the very near future. The powers of the LSCC can include: setting targets for the handling of complaints; making recommendations about complaints handling; requiring a failing body to submit a plan for complaints handling and levying fines if the body fails to submit a plan or comply with the agreed plan to improve complaints handling.

Witnesses and Victims (Court Evidence)

33. **Mrs. Betty Williams:** To ask the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Constitutional Affairs, what measures are being taken to encourage witnesses and victims to come forward to give evidence in court. [147130]

Mr. Leslie: Last July, the Government published a National Strategy setting out the steps we are taking to deliver improved services to victims and witnesses in the Criminal Justice System.

At its heart is the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill, introduced last November and containing a number of measures aimed at encouraging more witnesses to come to court and give evidence.

Correspondence

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if the Lord Chancellor will answer the letter to him from the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood dated 28 November 2003, regarding the case of his constituent, Mr. J. Lawrence. [146952]

Mr. Leslie: My Department is currently considering the matters raised by the hon. Member in his letter of 28 November 2003. The Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will list information technology contracts in his Department with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146198]

Mr. Leslie: The information for my Department is as follows:

LOCCS (various court-based IT systems):

The EDS (LOGCS) contract was awarded to EDS in September 1996, to provide IT systems to Crown and county courts. The lifetime cost of the contract is assessed at £210 million.

The initial rollout of equipment to courts was completed in August 2001. The contract was fully functional from award. The contract includes provisions to test software prior to release, and to fix software 'bugs' which are attributable to supplier software.

The LOCCS rollout was completed to time, and subsequent major work programmes have been delivered to time.

A major provision of new IT equipment to the Crown Court (and those county courts co-located with crown court buildings) under the LOCCS contract was agreed in 2003. This is part of the Government's commitment to modernising the Criminal Justice System. This programme of change had replaced the equipment and significantly enhanced the IT functionality available at 31 Crown and County Court centres by the end of 2003 and is on schedule to be completed in all of the 109 sites within scope by 2006. An extension to this rollout of a further 59 stand alone county courts is being planned. These additional sites will also be completed in 2006.

ARAMIS (Resource Accounting and Management Information System):

This is a PFI contract for the provision of accounting, financial, HR/payroll and management information services. It was awarded in December 1997 and runs until January 2007. Its current anticipated life-time cost is £207.7 million, which includes enhancements to the service during 2003.

Most services have IT elements and are delivered across an IT infrastructure provided through the contract. However, the IT system elements of the contract are not separated out from the main business functions. All the services are being provided within the lifetime of the contract, and major work programmes have been delivered to time. Debugging of the IT system elements is a process which continues through the lifetime of the contract.

Libra (magistrates' courts IT systems):

The original contract with Fujitsu Systems for Libra included provision for infrastructure and Office Automation, a bespoke case management software application and systems integration.

This contract with Fujitsu Services for the delivery of Libra has been varied twice since it was awarded in December 1998. This has resulted in changes to the baseline making it inappropriate to compare spend to date across an original and two variants of the contract. The actual spend against the original contract can be summarised as follows:

Original ICL Contract December 1998: Total contracted charges expected to arise over contract life of 10.5 years—£184 million

Negotiated ICL Contract May 2000: Total contracted charges expected to arise over contract life of 14.5 years—£319 million

Negotiated Fujitsu Services Contract July 2002: Total contract charges expected to arise over contract life of 8.5 years—£232 million

Total contracted charges paid by year ending December 2003—£127 million

Libra is now being sourced through three separate contracts, one to provide the underlying infrastructure and Office Automation Services, one to supply a new case management application and the third to deploy that application and integrate all systems. These include, where necessary, provisions to test the software and to fix any "bugs" which are attributable to supplier software prior to release.

The contract signed with Fujitsu Services in July 2002 included the provision of Libra infrastructure and Office Automation only. The roll-out of these was successfully completed in September 2003.

A further contract was signed with STL in January 2003 for £37 million to provide a case management software application. The first release of this application is due in November 2004 with two further enhancements to be completed before November 2005. STL will continue to provide support and enhancement services through to 2008.

A contract was also signed with Accenture in October 2003 for £38 million to deploy the new application to the Magistrates' courts (planned completion by the end of 2005) and to provide on-going systems integration services through to 2008.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs on how many occasions the Secretary of State met the Secretary of State for Home Affairs to discuss *(a)* asylum seekers and *(b)* reform of the criminal justice system in the last 12 months. [146673]

Mr. Lammy: In the last 12 months the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs has met the Secretary of State for Home Affairs to discuss asylum seekers on eight separate occasions and on 15 separate occasions to discuss reform of the criminal justice system. They will also have discussed these issues in the context of other meetings.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefit Payments (Pensioners)

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent estimate he has made of the amount of unclaimed benefits due to pensioners. [146748]

Malcolm Wicks: The latest estimates of the amount of unclaimed benefits for pensioners eligible for income-related benefits relate to financial year 2000–01. These cover Minimum Income Guarantee, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and are available in the DWP report "Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-up in 2000–01". A copy of the publication is held in the Library. Statistics covering 2001–02 will be released in February.

No estimates are available of the amount of 'unclaimed' State Pension. This is because anyone eligible for a State Pension can choose to defer taking it, and then receive a higher amount once they begin claiming. Therefore, pension that is so far unclaimed may be being deliberately deferred.

Information relating to unclaimed disability benefits is not available.

We are unable to provide any reliable estimate of the number of unclaimed Winter Fuel Payments because some people aged 60 or over are excluded, others choose not to claim and payments are based on household composition. However, most people are paid automatically.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions further to the letter to the hon. Member for Wycombe of 18 December 2003, from Doug Smith, Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency, for what reason it is not possible to provide information concerning anomalies, inaccuracies and incomplete data contained in records held by the Child Support Agency before the CSA's data migration strategy is finalised. [147062]

Mr. Pond: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the Chief Executive, Mr. Doug Smith. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Doug Smith to Mr. Paul Goodman, dated 13 January 2004:

In replying to your recent Parliamentary questions about the Child Support Agency the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Chief Executive.

In response to my reply to you dated 18 December 2003 you asked for the reason why it is not possible to provide information concerning anomalies, inaccuracies and incomplete data contained in records held by the Child Support Agency before the CSA's data migration strategy is finalised.

That is because as part of finalising the data migration strategy we are continuing to research the likely number of "anomalies, inaccuracies and incomplete data" associated with each of the options being explored.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many sufferers from *(a)* Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and *(b)* Multiple Sclerosis were awarded disability living allowance in the last five years; and what percentage of those applying that represented in each case. [146609]

Maria Eagle: The required information is in the following table.

Number of new awards each year to people whose main disabling condition is Multiple Sclerosis or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Thousand

Year ending	*All new awards*	*New awards where main disabling condition is Multiple Sclerosis*	*Percentage of new awards*	*New awards where main disabling condition is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*	*Percentage of new awards*
31 August 1999	218.9	3.1	1.4	1.5	0.7
31 August 2000	226.1	3.5	1.5	1.7	0.7
31 August 2001	250.4	3.5	1.4	2.0	0.8
31 August 2002	256.0	3.1	1.2	2.3	0.9
31 August 2003	262.5	2.8	1.1	2.2	0.8

Notes:

1. Figures are in thousands and rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Total number of applications by disabling condition are unavailable.
3. In order to count 'sufferers', people with multiple awards during the year are counted only once.

Source:

IAD Information Centre, 5 per cent. sample.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on chronic fatigue syndrome in relation to benefits; [146633]

(2) what assessment he has made of the suitability of Disability Living Allowance application forms for those suffering from variable conditions; [146610]

(3) how many officials dealing with Disability Living Allowance have specialist knowledge of chronic fatigue syndrome; [146608]

(4) what recent discussions he has had with the Disability Living Allowance Appeals Service on how to deal with variable conditions. [146611]

Maria Eagle: People with chronic fatigue syndrome are entitled to social security benefits if they meet the usual qualifying conditions for them. For Disability Living Allowance, entitlement depends on the effects that severe physical or mental disability have on a person's need for personal care and/or their ability to walk, and not on particular disabilities or diagnoses.

The Disability Living Allowance claim form is designed to enable all disabled people to give full details of the effects of their disabilities on their need for personal care and ability to walk, and specifically asks for as much detail as possible about variations in their condition. In view of the concern disabled people have expressed about the length and complexity of the form, we are developing and trialling a number of new style claim packs which will give even better opportunities for people to detail how their disabilities affect them on a day to day basis.

Some 1,180 decision makers decide claims for Disability Living Allowance. All of them receive specific training on the causes, manifestations and management of chronic fatigue syndrome. Guidance about the effects of particular disabilities is available to decision makers in the Disability Handbook published by the Department's Corporate Medical Group. The section on chronic fatigue syndrome was written and compiled following consultation with experts in this area of medicine including the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association. Decision makers can also seek advice from the Department's medical services doctors, all of whom are trained disability analysts with specialist knowledge of assessing the effects of disability and who receive specific guidance on assessing the effects of chronic fatigue syndrome as one of their training modules.

There have been no recent discussions with the Appeals Service on how to deal with Disability Living Allowance claims from people with variable conditions. The Appeals Service is an independent body and it would not be appropriate to seek to influence how they might deal generally with cases involving particular disabilities. On individual cases being considered by the Appeals Service, however, it is open to the Department to express its views about whether the conditions for entitlement to benefit are, or are not, met. In this connection, the recent judgment of the House of Lords in the case of "Moyna" ([2003] UKHL 44) confirmed that the correct approach to entitlement to Disability Living Allowance for people with variable conditions is to take a "broad view". This judgment is binding on both decision makers and the Appeals Service.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Business Start-ups

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken to help people in the North East who are 50 and over who are not working to set up their own businesses. [144769]

Jacqui Smith: Self-employment provision is delivered on behalf of the Government primarily through the Small Business Service by Business Link Operators, and their network of providers.

This provision is aimed at all who want to start-up, without any form of prejudice, and regardless of their employment status. They work hard to create effective and efficient referral mechanisms (commonly known as brokerage) to ensure that each customer gets appropriate support for their needs—regardless of ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation or residential location.

Business Links in the NE work with all potential partners and stakeholders, including Jobcentre Plus, who deliver the self-employment option of New Deal 50+ through their network of providers.

The standard model in New Deal provides:

An initial awareness session for potential participants during the New Deal "Gateway" period;

A period of supported business planning with a business expert, and

A period of "test trading", whereby participants start their business while continuing to receive benefits to help them over any initial transitional hurdles. This period can last up to a maximum of 26 weeks.

New Deal is just one of many support programmes for budding entrepreneurs. A range of initiatives exist within programmes, focussed upon "deprived areas" (Employment Zones, Action Teams and New Deal for Communities) and groups, and advice and support is also provided by the Small Business Service (DTI), with funding from the European Social Fund and the Prince's Trust Business Programme (which is partly funded by DWP) underpinning much of the support.

NE Business Links all seek to provide on-going support for all who come through this process.

The Regional Development Agency, One North East are currently providing funding to the national organisation for promoting enterprise amongst the over 50s, PRIME to the tune of £185,550 to provide assistance to promote/assist self employment/business start-up to people over 50 in the North East.

This has a special focus on those who are economically inactive, unemployed, and/or a financially and socially excluded background.

This is delivered thought local partner organisations which contract with PRIME to supply marketing and outreach programmes, as well as business start-up services from pre-start up advice through to post start-up support and mentoring.

The project also makes available PRIME loans to provide "last resort" start-up finance to non-working people over the age of 50 for promising business ventures. ONE NE's funding also provides the resources for the PRIME regional development officer, who has specific responsibility to co-ordinate delivery of the PRIME initiative in the North East region. It also provides financial incentives to PRIME loan associates and their approved contractees to target the economically inactive and unemployed over 50s. Business Link Tees Valley, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency, is one such loan associate.

NE Business Links actively work with their networks of enterprise training and development providers to ensure that information, advice and assistance is provided to people aged above 50, which match their individual circumstances. The PRIME scheme is introduced to people where appropriate.

Business Support Schemes

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was been spent on *(a)* regional venture capital funds, *(b)* Faraday Centres, *(c)* University Challenge Seed Funds, *(d)* SMART schemes and *(e)* Enterprise areas in each year since each was established. [146146]

Nigel Griffiths: The information is as follows:

(a) Regional Venture Capital Funds:

Regional Venture Capital Funds were launched in 2001. DTI spend has been as follows:

Year	*£ million*
2001–02	2.1
2002–03	9.1
Total	11.1

(b) Faraday Centres:

There is no Faraday Centres scheme, but the DTI supports Faraday Partnerships. Faraday Partnerships aim to bring new products and processes, based on the UK science base, to the market more effectively. DTI and the Research Councils support 23 of the 24 Faraday Partnerships: the other is supported by the Scottish Executive and DEFRA.

DTI spend on Faraday Partnerships to date has been:

Year	*£*
2000–01	1,915,311
2001–02	3,351,631
2002–03	5,903,343
2003–04[1]	2,904,500
Total	14,074,786

[1] First two quarters

(c) University Challenge:

University Challenge has had the following amounts allocated to it:

Year	*£ million*
1999–2000	10
2000–01	10
2001–02	20
2002–03	5

There are no current plans for any future separate funding for University Challenge. The sorts of activities which UC funded will in future be supported through the expanded Higher Education Innovation Fund.

(d) Smart (including SPUR):

DTI expenditure on Smart (including the SPUR scheme which was fully incorporated into Smart in 1997) has been as follows:

£ million

Financial Year	*Expenditure*
1988–89	3.0
1989–90	5.0
1990–91	9.0
1991–92	12.3
1992–93	18.0
1993–94	21.5
1994–95	21.9
1995–96	20.1
1996–97	20.5
1997–98	25.8
1998–99	24.9
1999–2000	26.5
2000–01	27.3
2001–02	23.7
2002–03	32.1

(e) Enterprise Areas:

Enterprise Areas are not a scheme but are a designation of the 1,997 most deprived wards in the UK. A range of policy measures are available to help people and businesses in Enterprise Areas. They provide a focus for local and regional organisations to tackle market failures and the barriers to enterprise that their communities face.

Government is encouraging key organisations; Local Authorities, RDAs; Business Link Operators and Local Strategic Partnerships to work with the business community to raise awareness of the help and support available and to co-ordinate their activities in order to target their efforts on Enterprise Areas.

Company Administration

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will investigate the fees paid to firms charged with undertaking the receipt of companies into administration. [146496]

Mr. Sutcliffe: Neither my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State nor the Chancellor of the Exchequer have any power to intervene in the fees charged by administrators. Rule 2.47 of the Insolvency Rules 1986 sets out the basis for fixing their remuneration and, where it is not fixed by the creditors' committee or the creditors, the administrator may apply to the court.

Debarred Directors

Mr. Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what circumstances she is able to take action to debar directors of companies; and what plans she has to extend those powers. [146514]

Mr. Sutcliffe: Following a company going into liquidation, administration or administrative receivership or an investigation into its affairs under the Companies Act 1985 or Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, if it appears to the Secretary of State that it is expedient in the public interest, she may apply to the court for an order (or accept an undertaking) under the Companies Directors Disqualification Act 1986 which disqualifies an individual from being a director of any company for a period of up to 15 years.

The court may also disqualify a director who is guilty of certain offences in relation to companies, persistent breaches of company legislation or a breach of competition law.

There no plans to amend these powers.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how officials from her Department made contact with the British-based companies alleged to have breached Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development business ethics guidelines in the last report of the UN Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of the Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; what responses have been received so far; whether responses will be placed in the Library; and if she will make a statement. [146414]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The National Contact Point (NCP) for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises contacted some of the companies mentioned in Schedule 3 of the UN Panel report directly, the remaining companies made contact with the NCP. In all cases this resulted in face-to-face discussions with either the company or their legal representatives. In all cases the companies denied any wrongdoing and indicated their willingness to act in accordance with the OECD Guidelines. In the absence of evidence of specific instances of breaching the Guidelines, the companies have not—been in a position to respond substantively to the allegations by the UN Panel. All communications with the Panel are undertaken within the confidentiality provisions of the Guidelines and consequently the Government will be unable to place a copy of any response in the Library. My hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mullin) made a statement to the House on 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 142–44WS, regarding the UN Panel of Experts report and I have nothing to add to that statement at this time.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response her Department has received to its request to the UN Panel of Experts on the

Illegal Exploitation of the Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for further information and evidence on the allegations against British-based companies contained in its last report; whether this information can still be provided by the UN following the disbandment of the Panel of Experts on 31 October 2003; what the process is for obtaining information from a UN Panel of Experts which has been disbanded; if she will place a copy of her Department's request to the UN Panel of Experts' response in the Library once it is received; whether her Department made representations to the UN with regard to the disbandment of the Panel; and if she will make a statement. [146415]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Following oral requests by the UK Mission at the UN to the Chairman of the Panel of Experts for evidence of specific instances of breaching the OECD Guidelines, a letter was sent to the UN Secretariat on 17 November and resent again a week later. To date there has been no reply to either letter.

The National Contact Point (NCP) has repeatedly attempted to telephone the Political Secretary to the Panel and has left messages without response. Consequently we are about to make further representations to Ambassador Kassem who chaired the panel to provide the necessary evidence.

Members of the panel indicated in April 2003 that they were in possession of a good deal of documentary evidence, none of which has, thus far, been provided. We believe the disbanding of the panel should not necessarily affect the early availability or provision of this documentation. As you will be aware from the ministerial statement made by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 17 December 2003, *Official Report,* columns 142–44WS, NCPs from all countries involved have been assured that this information would be provided and are frustrated that this has not yet happened.

All communications with the Panel have been conducted under the confidentiality provisions of the Guidelines and consequently the Government will be unable to place a copy of the request, or any response, in the Library.

My department made no representations to the UN with regard to the disbandment of the Panel, whose original time-limited mandate had already been extended on several occasions

Departmental Grants

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been spent by her Department in establishing the Benchmark Index for business. [145512]

Nigel Griffiths: £4 million was spent before this financial year, with a further £0.5 million allocated up to 31 March 2004.

The DTI Small Business Service's Benchmark Index service enables companies to assess where they stand against their competitors in about 80 different aspects of performance. Around 9,000 benchmarks have been carried out.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much funding has been provided by her Department to fund the Connect website for small businesses. [145516]

Nigel Griffiths: The CONNECT website has been funded to a total of £125,000.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many staff in her Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146905]

Ms Hewitt: Three hundred and eighty nine DTI staff work in the West Midlands and a further 25 in Staffordshire.

ECGD

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which unrecovered claims outstanding with the Export Credits Guarantee Department her Department has established as unrecoverable; who the debtor is in each case; what the amount of outstanding debt is in each case; and what the project type is. [144807]

Mike O'Brien: It would not be possible to provide the majority of this information except at disproportionate cost. Some of the information could not be disclosed in any event, as to do so could prejudice negotiations ECGD is having or will have about recovering debt. Furthermore, it is only possible to say with confidence what is unrecoverable once recovery action is complete.

Economic Partnership Agreements

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list Economic Partnership Agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. [146636]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The requirement for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiations is set out in the EU/ACP Cotonou Agreement. No EPA has yet been agreed between the EU and an ACP region. Phase 1 of the negotiations began in September 2002. The EU announced the launch of EPA negotiations with the Western and Central African regions—CEMAC (Central African Economic and Monetary Community) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of Western African States) in October 2003. Launches of negotiations between the EU and other ACP regions are expected to take place later this year. EPAs are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2008.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effect of the economic partnership agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries on the economies of the *(a)* ACP countries and *(b)* European Union members. [146638]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: My officials regularly seek progress updates from EU (European Union) officials on the required Sustainable Impact Assessments on the effect of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states.

The first phase of this work is currently being finalised by the EU and is expected to be published on the EU's website later this month. My officials will liaise with the EU on issues arising from this assessment work.

Electrical Waste Directive

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the implications of the waste electrical and electronic equipment directive for *(a)* manufacturers and *(b)* retailers. [146983]

Mr. Timms: The implications of the EU directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) for local authorities, manufacturers, retailers and others are set out in a consultation paper which the Government published on 25 November 2003. This is available at or may be downloaded from the Department's website at http://www.dti.gov.uk/sustainability/weee/index.htm. Copies are available in the House Library.

This consultation paper invites views on the Government's preferred approach to implementing the directive. It includes proposals for implementation of the directive's provisions on producer responsibility and retailer take-back.

The WEEE directive places no obligations on local authorities. The Government have made clear that there will be no new unfinanced burdens on local authorities as a result of the directive. However, the Government aim to encourage increased separate collection of WEEE in line with the directive's objectives and, in this context, it makes sense to build on existing collection activity at civic amenity sites. The Government wish to encourage local authorities to consider upgrading and/or introducing WEEE collection facilities at their amenity sites. It is proposed that money will be made available, via a fund, into which local authorities may bid to finance improved or greater separate collection of WEEE at their civic amenity sites.

The consultation suggests that this fund would be provided through a retailer take-back compliance scheme. The Government propose that the retailer scheme should provide funding initially of at least £5 million for civic amenity site upgrades in each of the five financial years between 2005–10, with an interim review in 2008, when the directive is expected to be revised. It is expected that most of the early expenditure would relate to capital costs and any initial operating costs.

The Government have included in its consultation package a report by consultants Network Recycling on the scope for upgrading and expanding WEEE collection at civic amenity sites around the UK. In summary, this report indicates that over half of civic amenity sites currently collect some WEEE and that there is significant scope for expanding this on the basis of site space available. It suggests that the baseline costs of such upgrades are in the region of £6–12 million, depending on the approach taken; and that on-going staffing and training costs could be in the region of £4–9 million per annum.

Energy Consumption

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much energy was consumed per person in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* other EU countries in 2001. [147404]

Mr. Timms: Data on EU and worldwide energy consumption are collated annually by the International Energy Agency. The final consumption data for all EU countries relating to 2001, are shown in the table. Final consumption excludes energy used for transformation into other forms of energy.

Country	*Final consumption of energy per person, in tonnes of oil equivalent during 2001*
Austria	3.17
Belgium	4.19
Denmark	2.83
Finland	4.86
France	2.89
Germany	2.99
Greece	1.83
Ireland	3.05
Italy	2.32
Luxembourg	8.55
Netherlands	3.76
Portugal	1.95
Spain	2.32
Sweden	3.92
UK	2.75
Average for all EU countries	2.82

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by how much energy efficiency has improved in *(a)* the UK, *(b)* England, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Wales in each year since 1997. [146124]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have been asked to reply.

At present, figures are available only for the household sector, and for the UK as a whole. Figures for UK industry will be available in the spring. The household figures are:

Household energy efficiency

	Improvement on previous year (percentage)
1997	2.2
1998	0.5
1999	1.3
2000	2.1
2001	2.5
2002	2.5

The figures for 2002 are provisional.

The figures fluctuate considerably from year to year, but no more than historically, with the average annual improvement over this particular period very similar to that for the whole period from 1990, around 1.7 per cent. pa.

Energy Research and Development

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was spent on research, demonstration and development, since July 2001, on *(a)* active solar power, *(b)* passive solar power, *(c)* wave power, *(d)* tidal power, *(e)* geothermal powers, *(f)* onshore wind powers, *(g)* offshore wind powers, *(h)* biomass energy, *(i)* hydrogen conversion technologies, *(j)* fuel cells, *(k)* nuclear fission, *(l)* nuclear fusion, *(m)* clean coal, *(n)* combined heat and power and *(o)* combined-cycle gas by (i) the Department and (ii) relevant publicly owned utilities in each year since 1991; and what payments have been made to (A) Euratom, (B) the European Commission's joint research centres and (C) the International Atomic Energy Agency in each year since 1991. [146582]

Mr. Timms: Available information is set out in the tables.

£ million

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*
Solar—Active (including PV)	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.7	1.7	2.0	5.3
Solar—Passive	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.2	1.6	1.5	1.3	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wave	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.9	0.9
Tidal	2.4	2.1	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	2.4
Geo Themal	2.0	1.5	1.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wind—Onshore	8.1	10.6	9.0	4.0	4.2	2.9	1.6	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.3	0.9
Wind—Offshore	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.8
Biomass	1.5	2.4	3.0	3.4	3.2	2.6	1.9	1.8	2.2	1.8	1.8	1.9
Fuel Cells	0.4	0.5	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.4
Nuclear (see Note 2)	93.6	85.5	76.9	28.4	21.7	21.4	17.6	14.2	16.8	16.8	16.4	16.7
Clean Coal	7.4	6.8	12.0	8.0	7.8	6.9	3.1	2.9	2.5	4.3	4.4	4.5
Combined Heat and Power	0.3	9.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.9	2.5	2.8	3.0

Notes:

1. Separate research programmes do not yet exist for hydrogen conversion technologies or combined-cycle gas.
2. Of DTI's total spend on nuclear R&D given above, about £15 million annually is on fusion research; there is. also some additional expenditure in support of Meteorological Office emergency response arrangements which currently accounts for approximately £2.1 million. Fusion expenditure for 2003–04 is £15.6 million. The Research Councils expenditure on fission was ca 300k pa in 2001–2 and 2002–3. In addition, £5 million has also been earmarked for fission research but has not yet been awarded.
3. The table sets out identified Government spend and excludes, for example, spending by Research Councils. Spending by relevant publicly owned utilities could not be separated in the manner requested without disproportionate cost.
4. DTI's sustainable energy R&D programme also includes support for activitieswhich are not technology specific, for example, export, commercialisation, marketing and international activities.
5. For combined heat and power, Govewrnment expenditure is through DEFRA.

Payment appropriations from EC Budget to Euratom and to the European Commission's joint research centre 1991–2003

€ million

	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
JRC	261	257	257	269	240	234	232	236	243	259	249	250	n/a
Euratom	-	-	-	-	156	235	261	176	426	173	187	200	86

Notes:

1. EC budget payments to Euratom began in 1995.
2. Euratom spending. Figures are based on payment appropriations in the available EC budget documents for 2001–2003 and reflect spending on the specific programme (Euratom) for research and training in the field of nuclear energy.
3. The main Euratom activities fall under budget titles 6 (Energy and Transport) and 8 (Research), as well as some external actions lines. The figures presented are based on payments made.
4. Nuclear expenditure currently accounts for approximately 28 per cent. of the JRC's budget.

My Department annually pays the UK's assessed contributions to the Regular Budget and to the Technical Co-operation Fund of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These are as follows:

Annual payments to the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1995—2004[1]

		£ million
1995	Regular Budget Subscription	8.0
	Technical Co-operation Fund	1.9
1996	Regular Budget Subscription	9.1
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.2
1997	Regular Budget Subscription	7.7
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.3
1998	Regular Budget Subscription	6.0
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.5
1999	Regular Budget Subscription	6.1
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.3
2000	Regular Budget Subscription	6.3
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.4
2001	Regular Budget Subscription	6.6
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.6
2002	Regular Budget Subscription	[2]7.5
	Technical Co-operation Fund	2.5
2003	Regular Budget Subscription	8.0
2004	Regular Budget Subscription	[3]7.6
	Technicial Co-operation Fund	[3]2.3

[1] Comparable figures for years before 1995 are unavailable.
[2] Corrected figure from that stated in Hansard 16 January 2003: column 792W.
[3] Provisional

In addition to the regular annual payments, my Department has made additional small voluntary contributions, which are summarised annually as follows.

Voluntary contributions to the IAFA from 1999—2003[1]

	£ million
1999	0.2
2000	0.1
2001	0.3
2002	0.5
2003	[2]0.8

[1] Comparable figures for years before 1999 are unavailable.
[2] Provisional

European Constitution

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the United Kingdom's policy is in the negotiations on the new European Constitution on the integration and scope of Euratom within the Constitution's framework. [147023]

Mr. Timms: The Convention on the Future of Europe proposed that the Euratom Treaty should remain separate from a new Constitutional Treaty for the EU. The Government was content with this as a basis for discussions in the context of the negotiations at the IGC. During the negotiations, a draft Protocol was considered which would be annexed to the new Constitutional Treaty, incorporating some of its institutional and financial provisions into the Euratom Treaty. As the IGC did not reach final agreement at the December Council, the Irish Presidency are now looking at how to take negotiations forward and will be reporting back at the Spring Council.

European Standard Funds

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will publish the mid-term verification of additionality document on the European Standard Funds submitted by her Department to the European Commission. [147727]

Jacqui Smith: There is no requirement and therefore no intention to publish the mid-term additionality verification documents produced by DTI for the UK Objective 1 areas.

The verification data supplied to the Commission for the mid-term additionality exercise showed that average annual expenditure in the period 2000–02 was equal to or better than that forecast in the 2000–06 ex-ante tables published in the original Single Programming Documents for each Objective 1 area.

Flexible Working

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps her Department is taking to ensure that workers who take up flexible working options do not suffer from *(a)* poor career prospects and *(b)* poor job security [146947]

Mr. Sutcliffe: According to the Labour Force Survey Spring 2003, 5.5 million employees work through some form of flexible working arrangement—equivalent to 22 per cent. of employees.

The Department surveyed employers and employees on work-life balance in January 2003, and specifically addressed the issues of job security and progression:

> The study of employers revealed that they largely reject the notion that flexible working can have an adverse impact on an employee's chances of promotion. Three-quarters (74 per cent.) of employers agreed that people who work flexibly are just as likely to be promoted as those that do not, while 15 per cent. neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know. The study of employees has only preliminary findings currently available, which can be found on the Internet (www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/). We expect to publish the full report soon.

The Government are seeking to affect a culture change in the workplace where flexible working is seen as the norm and there is no question of poor career prospects or job security. We are looking to do this in two main ways:

> Through the DTI's Work-Life Balance Campaign we are encouraging employers to offer flexible working opportunities across the workforce. In April 2003 a new law giving parents the right to request flexible working was introduced, placing a statutory duty on employers to consider the request seriously. This was targeted legislation for parents of young and disabled children as they face particular challenges.

The DTI is collecting evidence from a number of sources to monitor the impact of its action to promote flexible working practices:

> We continue to work with key intermediaries, such as Working Families and Maternity Alliance, who are collating data through member/supporter surveys. The Department has commissioned questions specifically relating to job security and progression which currently appear in the Office of National Statistics' Omnibus survey. The results of these are due in spring 2004. To provide a direct comparison over time, it is planned that both Work-Life Balance surveys will be repeated in 2005.

The information collected will contribute towards the review of the flexible working law that the Government have said will begin in 2006. This provides time for the legislation to bed down and have effect, alongside the on-going promotion of best practice. Collected information will also provide early warning of any problems or unintended consequences associated to flexible working and for the development of future policy.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how her Department plans to promote flexible working, with particular reference to male workers. [146948]

Mr. Sutcliffe: In addition to the detail I provided in my answer to my hon. Friend on 5 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 446W, I can confirm that as part of the on-going awareness raising campaign, adverts specifically targeting fathers are appearing in national newspapers throughout January, covering news and sport sections, with another burst of activity planned for March.

The Work-Life Balance Challenge Fund has also recently supported projects promoting flexible working in oil and engineering companies, which are traditionally considered to be male dominated industrial sectors.

Friction Dynamex

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations she has received following *(a)* the dismissal of workers at Friction Dynamex and *(b)* their failure to receive money awarded to them by the industrial tribunal; and if she will make a statement. [146829]

Mr. Sutcliffe: Throughout the dispute at Friction Dynamics and the subsequent tribunal process representations have been received on a number of issues from the TUC, the workers involved, the T&G union representing the workers, other interested unions, MPs and individuals.

Graffiti

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research her Department has carried out into the use of washable solvents in aerosol paint sprays as a means of combating graffiti. [142840]

Alun Michael: I have been asked to reply.

No such research has been carried out.

Industrial Disease

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the number of claims that could be lodged for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; and if she will make a statement. [147200]

Nigel Griffiths: As of 4 January 2004, we have received over 383,000 claims and these continue to come in at a rate of around 8,000 per week. If it continued at the present rate, the level of claims will reach approximately 480,000.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many workers who won their cases, since 1997, at industrial tribunals have failed to receive payments awarded; what sums have been defaulted upon in each case; what steps she is taking to resolve the problem; and if she will make a statement. [146513]

Mr. Sutcliffe: I regret that the information requested is not available. Individuals who do not receive sums awarded to them by employment tribunals are entitled to enforce those awards through the civil courts.

Iraq

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made since September on negotiations with the European Commission to reinstate the Generalised System of Preferences in Iraq. [145606]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The UK has continued to make representation to the European Commission on Iraq's eligibility under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), conveying the UK Government's wish to re-instate GSP in Iraq as soon as possible. The UK will continue to press for progress on this matter. DG Trade in the Commission have indicated their agreement of the importance of re-establishing GSP in Iraq as soon as possible.

With Iraq, the situation remains the same and a suitable body to take responsibility for the necessary administration of GSP has still to be identified.

Local Newspapers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of regional and local newspapers are owned by the five largest newspaper groups; and what proportion were owned by those groups in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1997. [146822]

Mr. Sutcliffe: This information cannot be provided from official statistics. However, some industry statistics relating to the question are available through the Newspaper Society.

Manufacturing Advisory Service

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the work of the Manufacturing Advisory Service within Coventry and the West Midlands since it was established; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure more manufacturers engage with their local MAS centres. [147242]

Jacqui Smith *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Since its launch in September 2002, the Manufacturing Advisory Service's regional centre in the West Midlands has achieved considerable success as a source of advice and support for manufacturers. It has responded to 2,377 inquiries from firms seeking advice, visited 895 companies to carry out initial health checks and completed 395 in depth consultancies in the West Midlands. It has worked with 88 companies in Coventry and 200 in the Coventry and Warwickshire Business Link catchment area, accounting for 4.3 per cent. and 9.9 per cent. respectively of the total number of manufacturers it has engaged with.

All the regional centres of the service have active programmes for marketing their services to local manufacturing firms. This, combined with the excellent reputation that the service has achieved among manufacturers, has resulted in a sustained and substantial increase in demand for its services. So far the MAS has dealt with approximately 15,500 inquiries and carried out over 4,500 diagnostic and advisory visits. The actual total value added it has given UK manufacturers is now approaching £30 million.

Ofgem

David Cairns: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what happens to the money raised in fines levied by Ofgem from power companies found guilty of erroneously transferring customers. [147422]

Mr. Timms: Section 59(10) of the Utilities Act 2000 requires that any sums received by Ofgem following the imposition of a financial penalty should be paid into the Consolidated Fund.

Photovoltaic Cells

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the number of photovoltaic cells *(a)* currently in use in the UK and *(b)* which will be in use in (i) 2005, (ii) 2006 and (iii) 2007. [147048]

Mr. Timms: Installed capacity at the end of 2002 was 4.14MW. Figures for 2003 are not yet available, but we expect capacity to have increased to around 6MW. By the end of the first phase of the Major Photovoltaics Demonstration Programme in 2005–06, we would expect that to have increased to between 12 and 15 MW. Predictions beyond that timescale are much less certain.

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants are available to promote the use of photovoltaic cells by *(a)* industry and commerce and *(b)* domestic consumers; and how much has been paid in grants in each case in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [147049]

Mr. Timms: The £20 million first phase of the Major Photovoltaic Demonstration Programme is open to all applicants, including industry, commerce and domestic consumers. The programme was launched in April 2002, and in the first year, £428,000 was paid out in grants to small-scale applicants (Stream 1, less than 5kW each). However, total grant committed was £1,220,000 for Stream 1 and £5,610,000 for Stream 2 (group housing and medium/large-scale non-residential buildings). There is normally a delay of three to 12 months between applications being approved and the PV systems being installed, depending on size.

So far during the second year of the programme, £730,000 of grants have been paid out for Stream 1 and £260,000 for Stream 2. Grants committed in the second year to end December are £1,700,000 for Stream 1 and £5,300,000 for Stream 2. Under Stream 1, about 70 per cent. of grants are going to domestic consumers, and about 6 per cent. to small and medium-sized enterprises. Under Stream 2, about 10 per cent. of grants have gone to industry and commerce.

Post Offices

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* urban and *(b)* rural post offices there are in each constituency; and how many post offices in each (i) constituency and (ii) region (A) have closed and (B) are expected to close as part of the Government's modernisation of the post office network. [147067]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Post Office Ltd. produces lists, updated annually, of post offices, classified as urban or rural, in each parliamentary constituency. The most recent list showing the position as at the end of April 2003 is available in the Library of the House. Post Office Ltd. expects that up to 3,000 urban sub post offices could close under the network reinvention programme but there is no list and the precise number of closures under the programme will not be known until it ends.

Final decisions on post office closure arrangements are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked its Chief Executive to respond directly to the hon. Member on the number of closures under the urban reinvention programme.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many sub-post offices in Scotland have been scheduled for closure by the Post Office under the Network Reinvention Scheme in each of the last four months, broken down by parliamentary constituency. [147469]

Mr. Timms: Proposals put out to consultation for, and subsequent decisions on post office closures under the urban reinvention programme are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which sub-post offices in Scotland scheduled for closure under the Network Reinvention Scheme remained open following public consultation on the proposal. [147470]

Mr. Timms: Decisions on post office closure proposals under the urban reinvention programme following public consultation are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Power Cuts (Yorkshire)

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many power cuts there have been in *(a)* the area for which Yorkshire Electricity provides power and *(b)* Haltemprice and Howden in each of the last five years; and what estimate she has made the cost to local businesses in each case. [147243]

Mr. Timms: Yorkshire Electricity Distribution Ltd. have advised that the number of interruptions affecting one or more customers per annum are as follows:

	(a) Yorkshire Electricity area	*(b) Haltemprice and Howden (including surrounding areas)*
1999	10,430	429
2000	10,995	438
2001	11,549	486
2002	13,581	446
2003	12,109	417

In 1999, Ofgem estimated that the value of each undelivered MWh of electricity represented around £3,000 in lost output to the economy. Quantifying the loss to a local area would be very difficult since it would be necessary to establish the monetary loss to each business on each occasion.

Strikes (Dismissal)

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many workers have been dismissed after striking for longer than eight weeks in each year since 1997; and which companies were involved in each case. [146830]

Mr. Sutcliffe: This information is not collated in official statistics. Protections were established by the Employment Relations Act 1999 against unfair dismissal for striking workers for an eight-week period from the start of official, lawfully organised industrial action. Only one case that we are aware of, that of Mr J. Davies *v.* Friction Dynamics, has arisen under the jurisdiction and an employment tribunal found in favour of the workers. Analyses by the Office of National Statistics suggest that over a three-year period 93 per cent. of strikes lasted less than eight weeks.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will bring forward legislation preventing auditors from selling tax avoidance schemes to their audit clients. [146534]

Mr. Sutcliffe: No. The Government concluded in January 2003, in the light of the Report of the Coordinating Group on Audit and Accounting Issues, that standards on auditor independence, including on the provision of non-audit services to audit clients, should be set by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). The Government invited the APB to look in particular at the provision of a number of non-audit services including taxation services. Following this, the APB published a consultation paper, "Draft Ethical Standards for Auditors", in November 2003. Paragraphs 4.40 to 4.52 of the consultation paper and paragraphs 51 to 66 of draft Ethical Standard 5 address the provision of tax services by audit firms to their audit clients. In addition, the revised Combined Code on Corporate Governance, published by the Financial Reporting Council in July 2003, places on the audit committee in a listed company responsibility for developing and implementing policy on the engagement of the external auditor to supply non-audit services.

Uzbekistan

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on trade relations with Uzbekistan since 2001. [145756]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The UK's trade with Uzbekistan is at a relatively low level. Bilateral trade totalled £36 million in 2002. Uzbekistan is a difficult market for exporters and investors. The Uzbek-British Trade and Industry Council (UBTIC) meets annually to discuss issues related to the development of bilateral trade.

World Trade

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1)what discussions she has had since 17 September 2003 with *(a)* the World Trade Organisation, *(b)* the European Commission and *(c)* the United States about the use of special and differential treatment; [146584]

(2) what progress has been made with the establishment of an expert working group on special and differential treatment to report to the General Council of the World Trade Organisation. [146644]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: It is important that WTO rules more fully reflect different WTO members' implementation capacities and stages of development. We are therefore disappointed at the lack of progress which has been made in addressing special and differential treatment issues post-Doha.

We had hoped to see agreement in Cancun to at least an initial package of measures, however limited, which might then have opened the way to a wider dialogue on special and differential treatment within the WTO, perhaps through the creation of an expert working group. In the event, no such package of measures was agreed and no progress made on establishing a wider dialogue, through an expert working group or otherwise.

We will continue to press the case for appropriate special and differential treatment within the WTO system with all relevant interlocutors.

HEALTH

Agency Staff

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the estimated cost to the NHS of timesheet fraud by agency staff was in each of the last six years. [147258]

Mr. Hutton: Estimated figures of timesheet fraud by agency staff across the whole national health service are not available. The Counter Fraud and Security Management Service has, however, investigated cases of timesheet fraud committed by both bank and agency staff that have resulted in 33 criminal prosecutions. Information will be sent to the NHS in England and Wales on how to improve systems and stop the fraudulent practices.

Animal Insulin

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the continuing availability of animal insulin; [147016]

(2) what assessment he has made of the difference in cost to the NHS of prescriptions of animal insulin as compared to GM insulin per 1,000 prescriptions; [147017]

(3) what assessment he has made of the benefits of GM insulin as against animal insulin. [147019]

Ms Rosie Winterton: There are two companies supplying animal insulin in the United Kingdom. The Department is in regular contact with these companies and both have confirmed that they will continue to supply animal insulin for the foreseeable future.

There has been no assessment or forecast made of the difference in cost of prescriptions of animal and genetically modified insulin per 1,000 prescriptions. However, the table shows the number of prescription items that were dispensed in the community in England, and their cost, in the 12 months ended June 2003 and the average net ingredient cost per item.

Number of prescription items, net ingredient cost and average net ingredient cost per item of insulins that were dispensed in the community in England for the 12 months ending June 2003

	Number of prescription items (£000)	*Net ingredient cost (£000)*	*Average net ingredient cost per item (£)*
Highly purified animal	128.1	4,217.2	32.92
Human sequence (GM insulin)	3,522.0	150,528.8	42.74
All insulins	3,650.0	154,746.0	42.40

Notes:

1. The data are from the Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) system which covers all prescription items that are dispensed in the community in England. This does not include drugs dispensed in hospitals or private prescriptions.

2. Insulins are those defined in the British National Formulary (BNF) paragraph 6.1.1, "Insulins". Insulin drugs have been grouped into highly purified animal and human sequence (GM) insulin in line with the British National Formulary (BNF)
3. Doctors write prescriptions on a prescription form. Each single item written on the form is counted as a prescription item. The net ingredient cost refers to the cost (which the dispenser is reimbursed) of the drug before discounts and does not include drugs dispensed in hospitals or private prescriptions.

Choice and Plurality Policies

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the percentage of patients on waiting lists who will accept the offer of an alternative provider under the Choice and Plurality policies; and what assessment he has made of the capacity available to meet the demand. [140620]

Mr. Hutton: All strategic health authorities have completed robust plans for the implementation of choice for patients waiting six months for elective surgery during April 2004 to December 2005. The plans anticipate that some 85,000 patients who have waited over six months will accept the choice of moving to another hospital for further treatment. From December 2005, choice will be offered at general practitioner referral, benefiting 10 million patients each year.

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether alternative medicine will be available to patients within the NHS under the Choice and Plurality policies. [140622]

Mr. Hutton: The need to develop a framework for access to complementary medicines was raised by the task groups in the National Consultation on Choice, Equity and Responsiveness. This suggestion will need further exploration and development and the Department will bring forward proposals for action in 2004.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [146004]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The latest staffing data, as at 1 April 2003, shows that in the Department and its agencies there are nine senior civil servants who have declared that they have a disability. This represents 2.4 per cent. of the total number of senior civil servants in the Department on that date.

Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics website at www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-oct03.pdf.

This information is also available in the Library.

Paediatric Continence

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research has been conducted on links between bowel and bladder problems in children and child abuse; [146723]

(2) how many parents have been *(a)* accused of and *(b)* admitted to abuse of their child as a result of nocturnal enuresis or daytime wetting; [146724]

(3) what research the Department has conducted into the prevalence of continence conditions in *(a)* children of offenders, *(b)* children in care, *(c)* children of asylum seekers and *(d)* children in lower socio-economic groups; [146725]

(4) which primary care trusts have dedicated paediatric continence services. [146726]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department of Health has not commissioned any recent research on links between bowel and bladder problems in children and child abuse.

Data on the number of parents accused, and admitting to abuse of their children as result of enuresis are not collected centrally.

A study published in 1997, based on data from the national study of health and growth, found that a father's social class was associated with enuresis only in girls, with a higher prevalence in those whose fathers were manual workers.

"Good practice in continence services", issued by the Department in April 2000, provides guidance to primary care trusts (PCTs) on continence services. This includes that PCTs should have specialist continence services in place, which provide patients with an individual assessment of their needs. Provision of these services in England is a matter for PCTs, which are responsible for determining the level of services required to meet the needs of their local populations. The Department does not monitor provision in this level of detail.

Toilet training for children is considered in the Department of Health guide, "Birth to Five", available free to first time mothers and at www.doh.gov.uk/birthtofive/. The Department has not commissioned any recent research on toilet training for children.

Continuing Care

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the reasons are for the delay in publishing the Continuing Care (National Health Service Responsibilities) Directions 2003. [147036]

Dr. Ladyman: As a result of amendments made to the Delayed Discharges (Continuing Care) Directions in response to external consultation with key stakeholders, the Continuing Care (National Health Service Responsibilities) Directions required consequential amendments, and further consultation. This has delayed the expected date of publication.

Dementia

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people with dementia live in residential care *(a)* in Cambridgeshire and *(b)* in England; and how many people with dementia in residential care are funded by the NHS. [146439]

Dr. Ladyman: There were 160 adults aged 18 and over with dementia receiving residential care in Cambridgeshire and an estimated 16,000 in England in 2001–02.

Information on the number of people with dementia in residential care funded by the national health service is not available.

Departmental Job Losses

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the results of the Executive Agency review into job losses in his Department will be published. [143055]

Mr. Hutton: The Department's review of its arm's length bodies will take place in the first half of 2004 and will cover executive non-departmental public bodies and special health authorities as well as executive agencies. No decision has yet been taken on publication of the results of the review.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of staff employed within his Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145931]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of staff over 55 years of age: 7.26

Number of staff over 55 years of age: 378

Percentage of staff over 55 years of age recruited over the past 12 months: 3.52

The Department has implemented the recommendations of the Government's "Winning the Generation Game" report. Equality of opportunity for all staff is a key feature of the Department's employment policy. There are no age barriers to employment and retirement age is determined on business needs only.

Drug Prices

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figure has been used by his Department in calculating drug price inflation in each of the last six years. [144144]

Mr. Hutton: The figures that reflect drug price inflation in each of the last six years are shown in the table.

	Percentage growth due to price
1997–98	4.60
1998–99	3.87
1999–2000	7.94
2000–01	1.74
2001–02	2.17
2002–03	6.26

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total NHS drugs bill was in each of the last six years. [144149]

Mr. Hutton: The total National Health Service drug spend for the last six years is shown in the tables.

£ million

Cash	*Primary Care*		*HCHS*	*Total Drug Spend*	
Year	*Gross outturn*	*Net outturn*	*outturn*	*Gross Outturn*	*Net Outturn*
1997–98	4,107	4,085	1,088	5,195	5,173
1998–99	4,356	4,339	1,211	5,567	5,550
1999–2000	4,851	4,833	1,369	6,220	6,202
2000–01	5,168	5,161	1,530	6,698	6,691
2001–02	5,559	5,552	1,740	7,298	7,292
2002–03	6,217	6,209	2,013	8,230	8,222

Note:

Cash Figures:

1. Primary care figures include amounts paid to pharmacy and appliance contractors by the PPA and amounts authorised for dispensing doctors and personal administration in England, for financial years April to March. The data do not cover costs for drugs dispensed in hospital, drugs prescribed in hospitals but dispensed in the community or private prescriptions. Note, Primary Care actual drug cost = Net ingredient cost + VAT + container costs—discount allowance.
2. Primary Care NET figures include Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) receipt savings.
3. Hospital and Community Health Services expenditure on drugs includes medical gases.

Source:

NB. Resource figures have been available only for the last three years.

£ million

Resource	*Primary Care Drug Spend*		*HCHS*	*Total Drug Spend*	
Year	*Gross outturn*	*Net outturn*	*outturn*	*Gross Outturn*	*Net Outturn*
2000–01	5,160	5,158	1,530	6,690	6,688
2001–02	5,714	5,707	1,740	7,454	7,447
2002–03	6,349	6,344	2,013	8,362	8,357

Note:

Resource Figures:

1. The total actual cost of drugs and appliances prescribed by GP/Nurses within England plus any central budget expenditure or locally authorised payments.
2. Primary Care NET figures include Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) receipt savings.
3. Hospital and Community Health Services expenditure on drugs includes medical gases.
4. 2002–03 figures are provisional and are still to be confirmed with accounts.

Source:

PPA England

NB. Resource figures have been available only for the last three years.

Emergency Readmissions

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of discharged patients aged 75 years and over were readmitted within one month as emergencies in each quarter since 1997. [147308]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department collects information on emergency re-admissions to hospital within 28 days of discharge. Between 1997 and 2002, this information was collected for those patients aged 75 and over.

Monitoring information is now collected on an all ages basis to avoid perverse incentives that could lead to older people being denied care in hospital when this is necessary.

The information requested is shown in the tables.

Financial year	Quarter	Number of people aged 75 and over discharged from hospital	Number of people aged 75 and over readmitted as an emergency within 28 days of discharge	Rate of 28 day emergency readmission for people aged over 75 (%)
2003–04	Q2			
2003–04	Q1			
2002–03	Q4			
2002–03	Q3			
2002–03	Q2			
2002–03	Q1			
2001–02	Q4	437,034	31,493	7.2
2001–02	Q3	429,124	31,427	7.3
2001–02	Q2	422,143	30,083	7.1
2001–02	Q1	408,817	29,878	7.3
2000–01	Q4	409,335	31,538	7.7
2000–01	Q3	411,137	29,896	7.3
2000–01	Q2	406,761	28,820	7.1
2000–01	01	390,010	28,735	7.4
1999–2000	Q4	377,277	28,611	7.6
1999–2000	Q3	368,244	26,523	7.2
1999–2000	Q2	368,329	26,758	7.3
1999–2000	Q1	346,079	26,702	7.7
1998–99	Q4	365,801	29,933	8.2
1998–99	Q3	361,266	29,110	8.1
1998–99	Q2	357,275	28,839	8.1
1998–99	Q1	342,787	29,213	8.5
1997–98	Q4	343,170	24,435	7.1
1997–98	Q3	335,188	23,771	7.1
1997–98	Q2	333,781	22,385	6.7
1997–98	Q1	326,996	23,557	7.2
1996–97	Q4	339,389	23,625	7.0

Financial year	Quarter	Number of people of all ages discharged from hospital	Number of people of all ages readmitted as an emergency within 28 days of discharge	Rate of 28 day emergency readmission for people of all ages (%)
2003–04	Q2	2,405,479	131,981	5.5
2003–04	Q1	2,402,573	135,153	5.6
2002–03	Q4	2,501,481	138,742	5.5
2002–03	Q3	2,429,606	131,704	5.4
2002–03	Q2	2,334,696	124,176	5.3
2002–03	Q1	2,313,818	125,085	5.4

Gas Price Increases

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the impact on the NHS of planned increases in gas prices; and what assumptions were made in the comprehensive spending review about the cost of gas and electricity supplies to the NHS. [146354]

Mr. Hutton: National health service gas is bought on a variety of contract options, contract start dates and differing indices. This limits exposure to severe increases across the portfolio, although individual sites may have experiences significantly above or below average, largely due to timing.

The total actual increases in gas costs for the NHS in 2003–04 will be approximately £7 million over and above the 2002–03 figure. If all gas had been bought at the highest peak prices so far in 2003–04, the increase would have been approximately £15.1 million.

As far as I am aware there are no further planned increases in gas prices beyond usual market forces.

In the comprehensive spending review, in 1998 and subsequent spending reviews in 2000 and 2002, there has been no special provision for inflation in gas and electricity prices. These have been covered by the general prices inflation.

General Practitioners

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* general practitioner partnerships and *(b)* single-handed practices have closed in (i) England and (ii) each strategic health authority in each of the last six years. [144319]

Mr. Hutton: This information is not collected. Successive annual censuses, published as "Statistics for General Medical practitioners in England", which is available at www.doh.gov.uk/public/stats1.htm, shows a steady trend towards larger partnerships with more general practitioners working in the national health service than ever before.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the need for general practitioner pay adjustments in areas not covered by the new General Medical Services contract. [144447]

Mr. Hutton: The benefits of the new general medical services (GMS) contract are potentially available to all general practitioners. However, over 40 per cent. of GPs have opted, over a period of time, for locally agreed personal medical services (PMS) contracts. In order that these GPs can also benefit from the key provisions of the new QMS contract, it has already been agreed, and communicated to the profession, that similar benefits will also be available to PMS practices. The benefits for which they will be eligible are:

- Comparable new investment to that proposed for QMS
- Comparable investment for delivering quality outcomes
- Improved seniority pay
- Improved pension benefits
- Increased investment in and modification to information management and technology systems
- More flexible premises arrangements
- The same ability to opt out of out of hour responsibilities

Therefore, comparable arrangements will be available to all GPs under either the new QMS or PMS contracts.

Mr. Bailey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of general practitioners who will retire in the next five years. [144604]

Mr. Hutton: Information on the estimated number of general practitioners who will retire in the next five years is not available.

NHS Land

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much NHS land his Department is planning to sell at the latest date for which figures are available. [144944]

Mr. Hutton: The planned receipts from land sales are £185 million for 2004–05 and £140 million for 2005–06, as set out in the Department's Capital Investment Strategy.

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Blizzard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to provide earmarked funding to local authorities to *(a)* increase capacity and *(b)* modernise services for adults with learning disability. [146735]

Dr. Ladyman: We have no such plans.

Our proposals for improving services for people with learning disabilities, their families and carers are set out in the White Paper, "Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century" (Cm 5086), published in March 2001. The White Paper announced the creation of two new funds to support its priorities, the Implementation Support Fund from April 2001 and the Learning Disability Development Fund from April 2002. Our annual report on learning disability, "Making Change Happen" (HC 514), published in April 2003, announced that the Support Fund would continue until March 2006; the Development Fund will also continue until March 2006. A copy of the report was sent to all English hon. and right hon. Members.

In addition, over £3 billion a year is spent on health and social care provision for people with learning disabilities. People with learning disabilities also use mainstream health and social services and benefit from increased expenditure on those services.

National Service Framework for Older People

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are in place to monitor the implementation of the national service framework for older people; what proportion of primary care trusts (PCTs) have implemented it; by what date PCTs should have implemented it; and what sanctions will be applied to PCTs that fail to do so. [146576]

Dr. Ladyman: The main service development milestones in the national service framework (NSF) for older people: specialist stroke services, joined-up mental health services for older people and more intermediate care services by April 2004, and the development of integratedfalls services by April 2005, are being monitored centrally as these are specific targets in "Improvement, Expansion and Reform": the priorities and planning framework for 2003 to 2006. The Commission for Health Audit and Inspection, with the Audit Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection will be conducting a study in 2005 to determine how well the NSF is being implemented.

Overall responsibility for ensuring that the NSF is implemented rests with individual strategic health authorities.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implementation of the national service framework for older people. [146577]

Dr. Ladyman: Good progress is being made with the implementation of the national service framework (NSF). The majority of organisations met the early milestones putting in place the structures and people needed for implementation.

The three key NSF milestones regarding the development of specialist stroke services, joined-up mental health services for older people and integrated falls services, and capacity assumptions for intermediate care services are included in the priorities and planning framework for 2003 to 2006 as "must do" targets. Most strategic health authorities are planning to meet these milestones. An on-going dialogue is taking place with the few who are not.

NHS Beds

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of NHS beds are single room beds, broken down by hospital trust. [145045]

Mr. Hutton: The data requested has been placed in the Library. The proportion of single rooms will vary from trust to trust depending on the services provided. Where primary care trusts have beds it is usually in a single hospital and where this provides mental health services, treatment patterns are likely to dictate a high proportion of single rooms.

NHS Finance

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the per capita expenditure was in each health authority in England and Wales in each year since 2000. [144630]

Mr. Hutton: Information relating to the per capita expenditure by English health authorities for 2000–01 and 2001–02 has been placed in the Library. Information relating to the strategic health authorities for 2002–03 (the latest year available) has also been placed in the Library. Information for Wales is a matter for the National Assembly for Wales.

NHS Professionals

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff have been recruited through NHS Professionals since its inception. [145668]

Mr. Hutton: A total of 63,363 temporary staff members have been recruited through NHS Professionals to date, of whom 60,463 were nurses, midwives or health visitors and 2,900 were doctors.

NHS Staff

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications to train as *(a)* general practitioners, *(b)* social workers and *(c)* physiotherapists have been received in each of the last six years. [144290]

Mr. Hutton: The national recruitment office for general practitioner training collects data on the number of applications and applicants to train as a GP. It has been in existence for 12 months and holds data for recruitment to GP training posts to commence August 2003 and February 2004. These are shown in table 1.

Prior to March 2003, information on the number of applications and applicants to train as a GP was not collected centrally. Information on the number of applicants for February 2004 is not yet available.

1. Applications and applicants to train as a GP August 2003 and February 2004

	August 2003 posts	*February 2004 posts*
Number of applications	4,339	4,602
Number of applicants	2,373	—

Notes:
1. August 2003 figures include English deaneries only. Northwestern deanery does not recruit to February posts.
2. For February 2004, some deaneries re-advertised unfilled posts. This data is not available yet.

Information on the total number of applications and applicants to train as social workers in England is not available centrally. However, the General Social Care Council collects information on applications made via the social work admissions system (SWAS) and this is shown in table 2. Only about 50 per cent. of all applications were made through SWAS, with the remainder made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS), or directly to colleges and universities. Comparable UCAS data is not available. Until 1998, data on applications was only collected on a United Kingdom-wide basis.

2. Applications through the Social Work Admissions System in England 1997–2002 for the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW)

	Number of applications
1997	n/a
1998	4,800
1999	4,049
2000	3,667
2001	3,678
2002	3,880

The number of applications and applicants to physiotherapy courses through UCAS by year of entry is shown in table 3.

3. Applications and applicants through UCAS in England 1997–2002 to train in physiotherapy

	Main scheme applications	*Main scheme applicants*
1997	28,428	7,057
1998	27,829	6,589
1999	26,162	6,184
2000	24,849	6,077
2001	21,535	5,383
2002	22,629	5,683

Note:
Each applicant can make up to six choices on the UCAS form for physiotherapy courses at different higher education institutions.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of staff have left NHS Estates (Inventures) in each of the last three years. [145021]

Mr. Hutton: The number of Inventures permanent civil servants leaving central Government for 2001–02, 2002–03 and 2003–04 was 28, 53 and 34 respectively.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many non-clinical staff are employed in each primary care trust in England, broken down by grade. [145937]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 5 January 2003]*: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Midwives

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many United Kingdom trained nurses were not registered to practise in the UK in each year since 1996; [147245]

(2) how many United Kingdom trained midwives were not practising in the United Kingdom in each year since 1996. [147246]

Mr. Hutton: The Department of Health does not collect the information requested.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council collects information on the number of midwives intending to practise in the United Kingdom as a proportion of effective midwives. This information can be found at www.nmc-uk.org.

Pain Management

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the waiting-time was *(a)* from written referral from general practitioner to first out-patient appointment with a pain management consultant and *(b)* for patients waiting for elective admission where the main specialty is pain management in (i) England, (ii) each NHS region and (iii) each strategic health authority in each of the last five years. [146217]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Physician's Assistants

Mr. Bailey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the potential role of physicians' assistants in the UK. [144603]

Mr. Hutton: The Department has commissioned an independent evaluation of the role of physician assistant. The evaluation began February 2003 and will run until 2005.

In the meantime, the national health service is developing roles similar to that of the physician assistant. These are being termed practitioner-level roles, and are designed to provide early assessment, diagnosis, and initiation of treatment, and so help improve the quality and timeliness of the care patients receive.

The Department is evaluating the success of these roles through a series of national trials in surgery, emergency care and anaesthetics. It is planned to include primary care in the trials, early in 2004. The trials will assess the benefits of the new ways of working for both patients and staff. The assessment will include measures of improved access to care, and of the reduction in the number of health care professionals a person has to see before treatment.

Population Growth

Ms Oona King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the impact population growth will have on East London primary care trusts reaching their capitation funding targets in the current

three year funding period to 2005–06; and whether there will be adjustments to national resource allocation policy to recognise population growth; [146411]

(2) whether additional health funding provided to meet population growth will be provided in advance of population increases. [146412]

Mr. Hutton: An assessment of the impact on capitation funding targets for primary care trusts in East London has been made using population projections produced by the Greater London Authority.

We are considering whether further analysis is needed and whether additional funding is necessary to meet the health needs of rapidly growing populations in these areas.

Professor Sir Roy Meadow

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether Professor Sir Roy Meadow *(a)* holds a post in and *(b)* receives a retainer from his Department. [144995]

Dr. Ladyman: Professor Sir Roy Meadow neither holds a post in, nor does he receive a retainer from the Department.

Professor Sir Roy Meadow was invited to be a consultant adviser to the Chief Medical Officer by Sir Kenneth Calman in April 1997. The post of consultant adviser was part of an established system which Sir Kenneth used as a means to gain advice at short notice. There were approximately 50 advisers covering different specialities. The advisers were paid an honorarium of in the region of £750 per annum. The post would usually last for three years, but Sir Roy resigned due to retirement with effect from the end of December 1998. He was therefore in post for 20 months. The present Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, dismantled the consultant adviser system. He prefers instead to work through medical Royal Colleges, specialist associations and other networks of experts to identify the best people to advise on the particular issue covered.

Public Services

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received a copy of the report by the Royal Statistical Society's Working Party on performance monitoring in the Public Services, Performance indicators: Good, Bad, and Ugly; and if he will make a statement. [146336]

Mr. Hutton: The Royal Statistical Society has called for independent scrutiny of performance data. The Commission for Health Improvement is already the independent regulator of national health service performance and is responsible for developing indicators and publishing NHS performance ratings. Ministers are not responsible for their calculation and publication.

From April 2004, responsibility for the rating process will pass over to the independent Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection.

Respiratory Disease

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of treating and managing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in each of the last five years; [146213]

(2) how many finished consultant episodes there have been for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease for *(a)* England, *(b)* each NHS region and *(c)* each strategic health authority in each year since 1996, broken down by age. [146215]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department of Health does not have precise estimates of the cost of treating respiratory disease. However it was recently estimated that respiratory disease accounts for approximately 6 per cent. of hospital expenditure, 13 per cent. of primary care expenditure and 12 per cent. of pharmaceutical expenditure.

Details of the Primary Diagnosis of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease count of Finished Consultant Episodes by region and strategic health authority of treatment and age grouping in national health service hospitals in England from 1996–97 to 2002–03, have been placed in the Library.

Sexual Intercourse

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he intends to measure the success of the Investing for Health target for the percentage of young people who have not experienced sexual intercourse before the age of 16. [145317]

Angela Smith: I have been asked to reply.

This will be determined from the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey.

The results of the latest survey are likely to be available in Spring 2004.

South and East Dorset PCT

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will correct the information on the NHS website relating to bed occupancy in the South and East Dorset Primary Care Trust; [147565]

(2) for what reason his Department refused the request of the South and East Dorset Primary Care Trust that inaccurate information in relation to the trust on the NHS website should be corrected. [147566]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Information on average daily bed availability and occupancy during 2002–03 was published on the Department of Health website on 11 September 2003. Final information for South and East Dorset Primary Care Trust was supplied on 2 July and no amendments were received after publication.

Information on bed availability and occupancy is published as final data and is generally not subject to further amendment once published. Any requests for major amendments would be considered on merit while maintaining the balance between ensuring consistency in published data and accuracy.

Speech Therapy

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many vacant posts for speech therapists there are in the NHS in England. [147089]

Mr. Hutton: The national health service vacancy survey collects information on the number of vacancies in the NHS lasting three months or more. As at March 2003, there were 150 three-month vacancies for speech and language therapists, a fall from 240 the previous year.

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many speech therapists are employed by the NHS in England. [147090]

Mr. Hutton: As at September 2002, there were 5,960 speech and language therapists employed in the national health service in England, an increase of 1,090, or 22 per cent., since 1997.

Systematic Spirometers

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the availability and use of systematic spirometers in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary care settings. [146209]

Dr. Ladyman: The information is not held centrally.

Primary care trusts, in partnership with local stakeholders, have the responsibility for deciding what services to provide for their populations, including those with respiratory disease. They are best placed to understand local health needs and commission services to meet them.

Variant CJD

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many recipients of blood products have died of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease since 1993. [145449]

Miss Melanie Johnson: No recipients of blood products have died of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his oral statement of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1571, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of the donor and the recipient of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease infected blood having independently contracted variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. [145454]

Miss Melanie Johnson: It is possible that both individuals acquired variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease by eating infected meat products. While it is impossible to be certain how the patient who received a blood donation from a person who went on to develop variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) contracted vCJD, in the light of the case history and the research evidence, the possibility of the route of transmission eing transfusion-related cannot be discounted.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his oral statement of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1571, what assessment he has made of the state of health of the second recipient of blood from the donor who later died of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. [145459]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The patient died of causes unrelated to Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

Waiting Lists/Times

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average waiting time for an initial referral to a consultant rheumatologist is in each strategic health authority. [144547]

Mr. Hutton: The table shows average waiting times for a first rheumatology out-patient appointment following general practitioner (G(D)P) referral.

Average (median) waiting times for first consultant out-patient appointment following G(D)P referral: rheumatology specialty: Strategic health authorities:

England: Quarter 2 2003–04

Strategic health authority	*Median waiting times (weeks)*
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire HA	11.1
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire HA	9.9
Essex HA	8.3
North West London HA	10.2
North Central London HA	8.6
North East London HA	10.8
South East London HA	9.1
South West London HA	14.0
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	7.6
County Durham & Tees Valley	7.7
North and East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire HA	10.5
West Yorkshire HA	8.8
Cumbria & Lancashire HA	9.7
Greater Manchester HA	10.6
Cheshire & Merseyside HA	10.2
Thames Valley HA	7.7
Hampshire and Isle of Wight HA	7.8
Kent and Medway HA	9.6
Surrey and Sussex HA	8.9
Avon, Gloucestershire & Wiltshire HA	8.7
South West Peninsula HA	10.6
Somerset & Dorset HA	7.2
South Yorkshire HA	8.0
Trent HA	8.7
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland HA	10.4
Shropshire and Staffordshire HA	11.1
Birmingham and The Black Country HA	8.2
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire HA	12.6

Source:
Department of Health form QM08

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Brownfield Sites

Llew Smith: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what proportion of the planned new communities development in the south-east is to be undertaken on brownfield sites; and if he will make a statement on criteria used in choosing between brownfield and greenfield sites. [147025]

Keith Hill: Through Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 Housing (PPG3) the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has introduced a series of tough new measures designed to meet the country's future housing needs in the most sustainable way possible. This includes a sequential approach which gives priority to re-using brownfield sites in urban areas in preference to developing greenfield sites. In addition, we have a national target that, by 2008, 60 per cent. of additional

housing should be provided on previously-developed land and through conversions of existing buildings. Performance against this target has risen from 58 per cent. in 1998 to 64 per cent. in 2002 for England as a whole. In the south-east, including London, the proportion is about 75 per cent.

The Sustainable Communities Plan sets out a strategy for carefully planned, sustainable growth which will protect communities from unplanned suburban sprawl. Much of the £610 million the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is ploughing into the four growth areas through the Sustainable Communities Plan will go into reclaiming poor quality brownfield land, or into transport improvements which will enable high density developments. For instance, the development of new communities at Ebbsfleet, Eastern Quarry and Barking Reach within the Thames Gateway all involve the redevelopment of large redundant industrial sites. However, in some cases sustainable urban extensions involving some greenfield land will be necessary.

Detailed planning of individual sites within the housing growth areas is not yet complete and it is not therefore possible to provide a figure for the proportion of development which will occur on previously developed land. The sequential approach described above will, however, apply.

Energy Performance of Buildings

Norman Baker: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what studies he has commissioned regarding the policies being adopted by other member states of the European Union concerning obligations on owners of larger privately-owned buildings to implement Article 7.3 of the energy performance of buildings directive. [147406]

Phil Hope: By January 2006, the energy performance of buildings directive requires the United Kingdom to oblige owners of larger buildings, occupied by certain types of public authorities and institutions, to openly display energy performance labels. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is considering how best to implement the directive, and, whilst the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has not yet commissioned studies of other member states' intentions, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister seeks relevant information in due course.

GP Services (Thurrock)

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what powers and additional resources are available to Thurrock Urban Development Corporation *(a)* to stem the reduction in general practitioner services within Thurrock and *(b)* to attract additional general practitioners to meet the projected growth planned by the urban development corporation; and if he will make a statement. [147011]

Keith Hill: The statutory objectives and powers of the Thurrock Urban Development Corporation (UDC) are set out in section 136 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The Thurrock UDC's overriding objective is to secure the regeneration of its area and to achieve this it has a general power to "... do anything necessary or expedient for this purpose, or for purposes incidental to those purposes".

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has earmarked an initial budget in the region of £60 million to enable the UDC to kick-start the growth, development and regeneration of Thurrock over the next three years. In order to access this funding the UDC's Board will need to develop a comprehensive area strategy, which clearly demonstrates how its intervention will achieve the regeneration of Thurrock.

As part of its work, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister would expect the UDC to liaise with other Government bodies and agencies that, while not directly involved in regeneration activity, are responsible for the wider social infrastructure that will influence the UDCs ability to deliver sustainable, balanced communities in Thurrock. To this end the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister would expect the UDC to assist and/or influence local, regional and national social/health care providers in the development of plans and strategies that directly relate to the growth, development and regeneration of Thurrock.

Local Government Funding (Nottinghamshire)

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the grant settlement for Newark and Sherwood District Council was for each of the last five financial years, and what the provisional grant settlement for 2004–05 is, in *(a)* cash and *(b)* percentage change terms. [146847]

Mr. Raynsford: The following table shows the grant settlements for Newark and Sherwood District Council for the period 1999–2000 to 2003–04, and for the provisional 2004–05 grant settlement.

Year	Previous years grant adjusted on a like-for-like basis with the current year (£ million)	Current years grant (£ million)	Change (£ million)	% change
1999–2000	6.854	7.041	0.187	2.7
2000–2001	7.041	7.300	0.259	3.7
2001–2002	7.349	7.676	0.327	4.4
2002–2003	7.570	7.881	0.311	4.1
2003–2004	7.699	8.610	0.911	11.8
2004–2005	7.830	8.065	0.235	3.0

During the above period, there have been a number of changes to the functions and funding of local services that have affected Newark and Sherwood. For this reason care must be taken in looking at year-on-year changes. The above table shows the year-on-year changes on a like-for-like basis over the period.

Mayor of London

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the level of financial provision estimated for the Mayor of London is for the financial years *(a)* 2004–05 and *(b)* 2005–06 is. [147160]

Mr. Raynsford: The Greater London Authority will receive the following funding for 2004–05 from the Government for itself and its four functional bodies (Transport for London, Metropolitan Police Authority, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and London Development Agency):

Grant	£ million
GLA general grant	36.3
GLA transport grant (for TfL)	2,224.5
Police grant (for MPA)	1,123.1
Revenue Support Grant (for MPA and LFEPA)	796.5
Non-domestic rates (for MPA and LFEPA)	171.3
LDA grant	[1]326.4
Total	4,678.1

[1] This figure is still indicative, and does not include LDA's share of the RDA performance fund.

Funding for 2005–06 will be decided later this year following the Government's 2004 spending review which will be concluded in the summer.

Planning (Housing and Car Parking)

John Mann: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what advice was last sent to planning authorities about car parking minimum requirements for new housing development; and when it was sent. [147735]

Keith Hill: Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (PPG3) makes it clear that car parking policies should not be expressed as minimum standards. It advises that car parking standards that result, on average, in development with more than 1.5 off-street car parking spaces per dwelling are unlikely to reflect the Government's emphasis on securing sustainable residential environments.

The most recent advice for local authorities was set out in an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Parliamentary Statement of 17 July 2003. This clarified that the PPG3 car parking policy did not expect that 1.5 spaces per dwelling should be provided for every dwelling in all new developments. Parking needs vary and that's why it was announced in the Statement the intention to carry out research to consider how varying car parking levels can be achieved in ways consistent with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's policy on securing sustainable residential environments.

Regional Chambers and Local Authorities

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the *(a)* regional chambers and *(b)* local authorities which have an office situated outside the United Kingdom; what the annual expenditure of each was since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [147185]

Mr. Raynsford: There are offices in Brussels representing each of the English regions. Some of them have been established for many years. They represent a range of regional and local interests. The lead organisation for the office and the interests it represents varies from region to region.

The Local Government Association has an office in Brussels and there are also offices for the counties of Cheshire, Essex, Kent, and Lancashire. Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and West Sussex have a shared office.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister does not hold details of the annual expenditure on these offices; such information would need to be sought from the individual bodies/authorities concerned.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister by what process the composition of regional chambers is determined. [147289]

Mr. Raynsford: The composition of the voluntary regional chambers is a matter for each chamber. However they are designated under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 as representative regional bodies to scrutinise the plans and activities of the regional development agencies. To meet the criteria for designation and receipt of grant their membership needs to be representative of the range of views and interests within the region. The Government expect at least 30 per cent. of Assembly members to come from stakeholder groups, including representative of business, trades unions, environmental, consumer and other groups.

The remainder come from local government, and reflect the broad political balance across the region. The selection process for membership varies from region to region.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what proportion of members of regional chambers are local councillors. [147290]

Mr. Raynsford: The proportion will vary slightly between regional chambers but in order to be designated under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 as representative regional bodies must not exceed 70 per cent. of the total membership.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list each member of each regional chamber; and what the *(a)* political and *(b)* trade union affiliation of each is. [147291]

Mr. Raynsford: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister does not record such information. It is up to each regional chamber to decide its own membership within the guidelines that, for designation, at least 30 per cent. of members must come from stakeholder groups.

Supporting People Programme

Harry Cohen: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what *(a)* progress has been made and *(b)* resources have been allocated to the Supporting People programme in (i) Redbridge and (ii) Waltham Forest; and if he will make a statement. [147378]

Keith Hill: Last October, the Government announced funding of £1.8 billion for 2003–04 financial year for the Supporting People programme in England of which Redbridge was awarded £4,466,479 and Waltham Forest £7,934,650.

The Government also announced an independent review of the Supporting People programme to gain a full picture of how the funding is being utilised. The Government have now received a report from the independent review team and are carefully considering its content. A response will be published in due course, and in time for local authorities to plan their 2004–05 budgets.

Transitional Protection Scheme

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister further to HB/CTB circular S9/2003 paragraphs 46–51, whether he is planning any consultation with local authorities on the ways in which the Transitional Protection Scheme will operate in 2004–05 and 2005–06; if he will provide exemplifications to local authorities before 1 January 2004 setting out the potential financial implications for 2004–05 and 2005–06 at an individual authority level of the transitional protection scheme; and what guidance the Government will be providing to individual local authorities. [145191]

Mr. Pond: I have been asked to reply.

Local authority representatives have been consulted, as part of the wider review of subsidy, on the operation of transitional protection in 2004–05 and 2005–06.

Transitional protection will limit the impact of the change in the housing benefit/council tax benefit subsidy regime from April 2004. The financial implications will not be known until authorities have their subsidy claims audited, after the end of the year. It will then be possible to compare the difference in subsidy under the old and new subsidy regimes.

HB/CTB circular S9/2003, a copy of which is available in the Library, gave an outline of the new subsidy scheme. Further guidance for authorities on how the transitional protection scheme will operate will be provided in the near future. This will provide further advice and information which will enable authorities to estimate possible gains/losses under the new subsidy system and consequently whether they may be affected by the transitional protection arrangements.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Service (Pay Dispute)

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken to resolve the pay dispute involving Civil Service employees. [146303]

Mr. Alexander: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1996 pay bargaining below the Senior Civil Service has been delegated to individual departments and agencies. Where disputes in departments and agencies exist it is a matter for the relevant department's management and their trade unions to resolve.

Hutton Inquiry

Mr. Webb: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of memoranda he has submitted to the Hutton Inquiry since the conclusion of the Inquiry's oral evidence sessions. [147060]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement made by Lord Hutton on this matter.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 January 2004

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Abandoned Vehicles

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many abandoned vehicles were collected in Huntingdon in 2002–03; what the average length of time was from notification to collection; and if she will make a statement. [146433]

Mr. Morley: One thousand one hundred and sixty, abandoned vehicles were removed and destroyed in Huntingdon in 2001–02, the most recent year for which data are available from the Municipal Waste Management Survey. Information on the length of time from notification to a local authority of an abandoned vehicle to its collection is not collected as part of the survey.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many abandoned vehicles were collected in Chorley in each of the last three years; and what the average length of time was from notification to collection. [146967]

Mr. Morley: The information requested for Chorley borough council is given in the table.

Financial year	*Number of Abandoned Vehicles Removed and Destroyed*
2000–01	300
2001–02	274

2001–02 is the most recent year for which data are available from the Municipal Waste Management Survey. Information on the length of time from notification to a local authority of an abandoned vehicle to its collection is not collected as part of the survey.

American Ships (Decommissioning)

Alan Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with Able UK on how it proposes to dispose of the polychlorinated biphenyls in the US ghost ships. [143441]

Mr. Morley: None. Regulation of this matter is for the Environment Agency. Environmental legislation requires that all wastes arising from the vessels would need to be treated or disposed of at facilities duly authorised to accept and deal with them. This includes disposal of wastes containing non-liquid polychlorinated biphenyls, which is confined to electrical insulation, gaskets, seals and similar uses on the ships.

Animal Medicines

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received about the European Union's changes to the status of animal medicines to veterinary prescription only pharmaceuticals. [147157]

Mr. Bradshaw: We have received letters opposing the European Commission's proposal to require all veterinary medicines for food producing animals to be prescription only. This proposal does not apply to medicines for companion animals.

During the review of the EU medicines legislation officials from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) have had regular discussions with interested parties on all aspects of the proposed changes to the veterinary medicines legislation. Particular account has been taken of the distribution of medicines for food producing animals. The Government's aim in the negotiations was to enable a flexible approach to such distribution that takes advantage of existing national practices so long as consumer protection and animal welfare can be demonstrably assured. This has been achieved.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the effect of the cost of veterinary prescription only pharmaceuticals on *(a)* farmers' incomes and *(b)* farm animal health. [147158]

Mr. Bradshaw: I have made no assessment of the effect of the cost of prescription only medicines on farmers incomes or farm animal health as the use of medicines relates directly to the husbandry methods and disease pattern on an individual farm. However, the Government have accepted Competition Commission recommendations in their Report on the supply within the United Kingdom of prescription only veterinary medicines that are designed to lead, over time, to an overall reduction in the cost of all veterinary medicines.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the United Kingdom Government will implement EU changes to the status of animal medicines to veterinary prescription only pharmaceuticals; and if she will make a statement. [147159]

Mr. Bradshaw: The European Parliament adopted a compromise text of amendments under Review 2001 in the second reading stage on 17 December 2003. This is expected to be considered for adoption by the Council of Ministers as soon as the translated texts are available. Once this has been achieved, we will be starting a full review of the UK legislation taking into account the changes to EU legislation, the recommendations of the Competition Commission Report on the supply within the United Kingdom of prescription only veterinary medicines and those of the Independent Review of Dispensing (Marsh Report). This will involve discussion with interested parties and will lead to formal proposals being circulated for consultation in early 2005.

We will implement the EU changes to the status of veterinary medicines for food producing animals. We will discuss proposals to amend national legislation to

introduce POM A, B and C categories as recommended in the Marsh Report. POM C comprise the current Pharmaceuticals and Merchants List products and these would continue to be distributed under the control of Specially Qualified Persons working for registered agricultural merchants.

Animal Welfare Bill

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the implications of the public consultation held in 2002 on the Animal Welfare Bill on progress of the Bill. [144537]

Mr. Bradshaw: The public consultation on an Animal Welfare Bill ended in April 2002 and attracted some 2,500 replies. The comments received in response to the consultation, together with the subsequent discussions we held with over 100 organisations representing a wide spectrum of views on animal welfare, have contributed greatly to the drafting of the Animal Welfare Bill. A further round of public consultation on a possible draft Bill is anticipated in spring 2004.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether there is scope within the new Animal Welfare Bill to cull out contiguous pockets of m.bovis infection in species other than badgers. [144589]

Mr. Bradshaw: No. The proposed Animal Welfare Bill will relate only to the welfare of captive and domestic animals. Wild animals in the wild are therefore outside the scope of the Bill.

CFC Gases

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the guidance will be issued to licensed premises for the recovery of CFC gases from disused refrigeration equipment. [147101]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency (EA) and Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) published guidance in April 2002. A review of this guidance has taken place in conjunction with SEPA and the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS). This revised guidance was sent out for external consultation with Fridge Destruction Industry.

Due to the recent amendment to the ODS Regulations, which now require member states to report on the amount of controlled substances recovered, recycled or destroyed every year, the Environment Agency is now reviewing the guidance, any additional changes will require further public consultation.

Following this consultation the guidance will be issued.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether since the amendment made to EU Regulation 2037/2000 of 7 November 2003, the Government have collated the figure for the tonnage of CFCs recovered from the de-manufacture of refrigeration equipment; and what figure was given to the EU Commission by the deadline of 31 December 2003. [147102]

Mr. Morley: Since the technical amendment was not published until 22 October 2003, and did not come into force until November the obligation on reporting only applies to the months of November and December. We are currently collecting this information.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average recovery level achieved by licensed UK plants in respect of CFC from refrigeration equipment was in the last year for which figures are available. [147103]

Mr. Morley: From the figures available for the fridge destruction plants, the average recovery rate of CFC from the R11 Blowing Agent in England and Wales in 2003 was 186.13 g per unit.

Denby Poultry

Judy Mallaber: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) pursuant to the statement of the Under-Secretary of State for Health, of 10 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1172, whether the Cabinet Committee on meat crime will consider issues of co-ordination between government departments and agencies arising from *(a)* the meat fraud conspiracy case at Denby Poultry and *(b)* previous meat fraud cases; [147092]

(2) pursuant to the statement of the Parliamentary-Under Secretary of State for Health, of 10 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1172, what the remit is of the Cabinet Committee on meat crime. [147093]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Although there is no committee looking specifically at "meat crime", there is a Cabinet Committee on Illegal Imports:

The Ministerial Committee on Illegal Imports (MISC 23), has the following Terms of Reference:

"To co-ordinate policy on imports of animals, plants, fish and their products".

Domestic Waste

Dr. Whitehead: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects to publish the results of her Department's investigation of the feasibility of variable charging for domestic waste collection. [145757]

Mr. Morley: In its response to the Strategy Unit report, "Waste Not, Want Not", the Government undertook to carry out further work before a decision is taken on whether to enable local authorities to implement direct or variable charging for waste. This work, which is looking at the practicalities of operating schemes, how potential disadvantages could be overcome and is analysing international experience of such schemes, is under way. The Government will consider the results of this work during 2004.

Environmental Council

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the outcome was of the Environmental Council on 22 December 2003; what the Government's stance was on the discussion on the EU Chemical Regulation; and if she will make a statement. [147229]

Mr. Morley: I attended the Environment Council on 22 December 2003, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Council adopted a Regulation establishing a transitional points system applicable to heavy goods vehicles travelling through Austria for 2004 (known as 'Ecopoints'), a matter previously dealt with by Transport ministers. Agreement had been reached between the Council and the European Parliament through the conciliation process, but there was a discussion in Council as Austria was unable to support the outcome. Council approved the result of the conciliation committee, with Austria voting against.

We held a short discussion on the proposed revision of the Directive on the management of bathing water. A compromise text prepared by the Presidency was unacceptable to the Commission and to a number of member states, including Germany, Greece and Spain, who believed it would produce an insufficiently demanding new Directive. The Secretary of State made it clear that the UK would be unable to agree to the legally binding targets to be reached by 2015, on which the Commission wished to insist. It was evident that there was no realistic prospect of reaching political agreement at this meeting, and the Italian Presidency decided to leave further negotiations to the forthcoming Irish Presidency.

We debated the Commission's proposals concerning the Kyoto Protocol's project mechanisms in relation to the EU scheme for greenhouse gas emissions trading. Ministers expressed their views on a number of questions posed by the Presidency. Most supported early linking to the Clean Development Mechanism, although views were divided on whether such linking could be made available prior to the Kyoto Protocol coming into force. There was also a range of views on the question of qualitative standards for projects, and on the use of sinks. The Secretary of State spoke in support of quantitative limits on the use of credits.

We agreed three sets of Council Conclusions: supporting the preparation of an EU strategy to reduce atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships; agreeing the EU's position for the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, to be held in Kuala Lumpur in February; and noting the Commission's 2003 environment policy review.

The Commission presented its recently-published proposal for a Regulation on the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals ('REACH'), urging the Council to make rapid progress and to maintain the integrity of the Commission's proposal. There were comments from several member states concerning the significance of this dossier, and the need for appropriate input from both the Environment and Competitiveness formations of the Council. Ireland confirmed that this dossier would be a priority during their Presidency, and that they would continue to involve both industry and environment ministers. There was no UK intervention.

There was an exchange of views on the Commission's proposal for a Regulation to extend the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE) until 2006. Portugal, Spain, Finland, France, Greece and Poland all expressed support for early agreement, and a wish to see LIFE continue beyond 2006. Germany and Sweden were also supportive but emphasised the need for the extension to take place within the existing financial perspective.

The Commission spoke briefly to note that its report on the European Environment Agency was due to be published within days.

There was no discussion of the remaining items under Other Business, which were all written items for information.

Over lunch we discussed the outcome of the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, and heard from Borge Brende, the Norwegian environment minister, who is to chair the 12th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD12) in April. He informed the ministers present that he has asked the Secretary of State to chair the UNECE Regional Implementation Forum in Geneva on 15–16 January, which will help prepare for CSD12.

Fisheries

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what type of trawl is used as standard for scientific fisheries research within the European Union. [146714]

Mr. Bradshaw: The type of trawl used for survey work varies according to target species and area. In the fisheries of interest to UK fishermen, the main trawls used for surveying bottom living fish are the GOV and the beam trawl.

The GOV is a general purpose bottom trawl with a high headline and is used for scientific surveys where the target species are the main commercially important whitefish including cod, haddock, whiting, pout and saithe. The net also samples some of the main shoaling or pelagic species including herring and mackerel. The design and operation of the GOV trawl is co-ordinated by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, and all countries involved in the International Bottom Trawl surveys in the North Sea use the GOV trawl with an internationally-agreed specification. In addition to the North Sea, the GOV is used in surveys in the west of Scotland and the eastern English Channel, and has recently been adopted as the main trawl for surveys in the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea.

For flatfish species such as plaice and sole, the main gear used is the beam trawl. Scientific surveys in the North Sea, eastern and western English Channel, the Irish Sea and Bristol Channel are again co-ordinated through ICES. The survey trawls are based on the beam trawls used commercially but vary slightly in size and specification between areas.

Scientifically, it is desirable that survey trawls remain unchanged over a relatively long time period in order to ensure consistency in the survey catch rates from year to year.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Government will pay transitional aid to fishing vessels in England adversely affected by effort controls resulting from the Cod Recovery Programme on the same basis as proposed for fishing vessels in Scotland and Northern Ireland. [147161]

Mr. Bradshaw: We have no plans to do so.

Flood Defences (Edgware)

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the flood defence works for the Silkstream, Edgware. [146617]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* As you know Defra approved the Environment Agency's proposed Silk Stream flood defence scheme in March 2003, subject to satisfactory resolution of negotiations with landowners. I understand that design and land negotiations are proceeding largely to plan, although having to deal with a variety of estates departments has resulted in some delay.

The Agency is undertaking a review of the relative priority of all capital schemes in the programme for Thames region, in the light of the available resources. Until that review is complete, the Agency is unable to provide an update of its planned timetable for the construction of the Silk Stream scheme.

Horse Passport

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when it will become an offence not to have a passport for all equines. [147946]

Alun Michael: From 1 July 2004.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the Hazardous Waste Regulations will be published. [142598]

Mr. Morley: Draft new Hazardous Waste Regulations will be published when Defra goes out to consultation on the Regulations in early 2004. After a 12 week consultation period, new Regulations should be laid before Parliament in spring 2004.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what mass of hazardous waste was produced in the UK for each of the last five years, broken down by category of hazardous waste. [144919]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency has provided the following data for England and Wales to show types of hazardous waste produced each year broken down by European Waste Catalogue (EWC) category. The Environment Agency moved from financial year to calendar year reporting in 2000, and only data for complete years is shown.

Trends in types of hazardous waste produced 1998–99 to 2002

Thousand tonnes

EWC Code	*Broad Category*	*1998–99*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
01	Wastes from Mining and Minerals	13	13	7	9
02	Waste from Agricultural and Food Production	6	9	6	4
03	Wastes from Wood and Paper Production	3	7	5	3
04	Wastes from Leather and Textile Production	2	3	3	4
05	Wastes from Petrol, Gas and Coal Refining/ Treatment	259	88	126	68
06	Wastes from Inorganic Chemical Processes	366	295	225	224
07	Wastes from Organic Chemical Processes	573	591	613	593
08	Wastes from Manufacture, Formulation, Supply and Use of Paints, Varnish, Adhesive and Inks	145	141	132	115
09	Wastes from the Photographic Industry	13	22	42	40
10	Wastes from Thermal Processes (inorganic)	113	176	215	191
11	Wastes from Metal Treatment and Coating Processes	146	120	127	115
12	Wastes from Shaping/Treatment of Metals and Plastics	151	96	96	94
13	Oil Wastes	1,036	1,098	1,042	1,008
14	Waste Solvents	109	139	110	63
15	Waste Packaging, Cloths, Filter Materials	48	65	69	52
16	Wastes Not Otherwise Specified	484	753	584	672
17	Construction and Demolition Wastes and Asbestos	1,008	1,064	1,385	1,243
18	Waste from Healthcare	17	17	21	20
19	Wastes from Waste/Water Treatment and Water Industry	235	306	278	346
20	Municipal arid Similar Commercial Wastes	86	129	49	98
99	Unclassified	99	64	78	95
	Total all classes	4,910	5,196	5,213	5,058

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the hazardous waste landfill sites identified by the Environment Agency that will remain as hazardous waste landfills following reclassification in July 2004; if she will identify for each site the types of hazardous waste that the site can dispose of; and whether each site is for private use. [144920]

Mr. Morley: The information requested, as at 16 December 2003 is set out in a table which has been placed in the Library. Under the new regulations, former sites can continue to accept hazardous waste if it is contained within a separate disposal cell. This is likely to lead to additional sites as well as these dedicated sites.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment has been made of *(a)* the lead content in glass television screens and *(b)* lead glass in crystal for household use, with respect to the disposal of hazardous waste; and if she will make a statement. [146716]

Mr. Morley: A draft study currently being finalised for Defra shows that lead oxide accounts for approximately 9 per cent. by mass of the cathode ray tube in television sets with screens of 19 inches and over. Lead bound up within the glass of the cathode ray tube does not leach very readily. No formal assessment of lead glass in crystal for household use has been carried out as such material when discarded is not on the hazardous waste list.

Mr. Bill O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the delay of the landfill allowance trading scheme until 2005. [146519]

Mr. Morley: The decision to delay the implementation of the landfill allowance trading scheme until 2005 which was announced by the Minister of State for Local and Regional Government on 19 November 2003, was made as part of Defra's contribution to helping to reduce spending pressures on local government in 2004–05. We expect local authorities to be able to save up to £10 million as a result. (On 6 January 2004 we announced that Defra will also provide a targeted grant of £20 million to local authorities in 2004–05 to help address the spending pressures arising from their statutory recycling targets).

The decision reflects the views of local authorities which we received through our consultation on the implementation of the landfill allowance trading scheme, that they needed more time to prepare for this new scheme which is a significant departure from their normal operations. The delay in starting the scheme will mean that waste disposal authorities will have to make steeper annual reductions in the amount of biodegradable waste they landfill in order to meet the first target year of 2010 but they will have more time to plan how to do this.

The Government will use the additional time to raise awareness of the scheme within local authorities and to educate and support those who will make use of its provisions.

Mr. Bill O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the impact of delaying the introduction of the landfill allowance trading scheme on achieving the UK's compliance with the landfill directive; and if she will make a statement. [146538]

Mr. Morley: Delaying the introduction of the landfill allowance trading scheme in England should not affect the achievement of landfill directive targets for the UK in 2010, 2013 and 2020. The delay is intended to give local authorities more time to decide how, and over what time period, to invest in alternative waste management options to landfill.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) whether her Department has received requests from waste disposal authorities for the start of the landfill allowance trading scheme to be delayed; [143092]

(2) whether her Department has received requests from waste disposal authorities for the start of the landfill allowance trading scheme to be delayed. [143091]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 9 December 2003]:* Yes. During regional consultation meetings on the implementation of theLandfill Allowance Trading Scheme held in September 2003, local authorities commented that they would find it difficult to operate the scheme in 2004–05. This view has been reinforced by the written responses to the consultation that have been analysed to date. Local Authorities generally feel that they need more time to prepare for a trading scheme that is a completely new departure from their normal operations. It has already been announced that the start date will be delayed by one year.

Puppy Farms

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what recent discussions she has had with her counterparts in the European Union on the import into the UK of puppies from puppy farms; [147455]

(2) what recent discussions she has had with her counterparts in the Republic of Ireland concerning the importation of puppies from puppy farms in the Republic of Ireland; [147465]

(3) how many puppies have been imported into the United Kingdom from puppy farms in the Republic of Ireland in each of the last five years; [147466]

(4) what licensing arrangements are in place in respect of importers of puppies from puppy farms in *(a)* the Irish Republic and *(b)* elsewhere; [147467]

(5) what recent representations she has received regarding the importation of puppies from puppy farms in *(a)* the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* elsewhere. [147468]

Mr. Bradshaw: There are no centrally held statistics available for the number of dogs imported into the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland because there are no restrictions on trade of animals between the two countries. However, all movements of animals for commercial purposes within the EU must comply with the provisions of EU Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport, which in the UK is implemented by the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997. There have been no discussions with my counterparts in the Republic of Ireland or the EU on the subject of importation of puppies from puppy farms into the UK.

Sandhurst Explosion

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will hold a Public Inquiry into the explosion at Cleansing Services Group, Sandhurst, Gloucestershire, in October 2000; and if she will make a statement. [143925]

Mr Morley *[holding answer 15 December 2003]:* I have recently received a Final Report (prepared by the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive) into the incident at Cleansing Services Group, Sandhurst. When I have considered the implications of this report, I will make a statement.

Tees Estuary

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what analysis has been made of the risk of the introduction of species of wildlife or plants from the James River estuary to the Tees estuary as a result of the arrival in Hartlepool of the US ships intended for decommissioning; [142332]

(2) what measures were taken to reduce the risk to the Tees estuary from the importation of alien species in ballast water in the US ships intended for decommissioning by Able UK. [142333]

Mr. Morley: The Environment Agency considered the risk of transfer of species of wildlife or plants in ballast water and imposed a condition on the Able UK waste management licence. This requires that no removal or disposal of ballast water may take place from any of the US vessels, except in accordance with a detailed method statement submitted to and approved in writing by the Agency. These are more stringent conditions than apply to the many visiting ships to the UK.

US Warships (Disposal)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the status of the ghost ships in Hartlepool. [145249]

Mr. Morley: Four decommissioned US government-owned vessels are currently being stored by Able UK at Hartlepool. The vessels have been surveyed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to assess the integrity of the vessels' structures and safety systems following their passage across the Atlantic, and were confirmed to be in satisfactory condition. The US authorities accept that the four ships will have to return to the US, unless environmentally suitable and legally acceptable methods for their disposal have been identified. The immediate return of the vessels is not practicable. In the meantime the Environment Agency has modified the conditions of Abie's waste management licence so that no dismantling, cutting or breaking of the vessels is permitted, pending the best environmental option for dealing with them.

Waste Management

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many officials in the Department have responsibility for waste management. [142591]

Mr. Morley: As at 15 December 2003, there are 95 officials employed by Defra with responsibility for waste management. In addition to this, there are four secondees who are on temporary placement.

Mr. Bill O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the polluter pays principle applies to management of the municipal waste stream; and if she will make a statement. [146517]

Mr. Morley: The Waste Framework Directive (75/442/EEC as amended by 91/156/EEC) sets out a range of measures on the management of waste—including its collection and disposal. These measures include Article 8 which requires that "any holder of waste has it handled by a private or public waste collector; and Article 15 which provides that "In accordance with the 'polluter pays' principle, the cost of disposing of waste must be borne by.... the holder who has it handled by a waste collector."

The Government has put a range of measures in place under Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994 to comply with the Directive's requirements. These measures include the arrangements for the collection and disposal of household waste-by-waste collection and disposal authorities. The cost of collection and disposal under these arrangements is met through taxation and charges. Most commercial and industrial waste is collected and disposed of by the private sector under arrangements which comply with the Directive. The cost of collection and disposal under these arrangement is met through charges.

Municipal waste includes household waste and any other wastes collected by a waste collection authority or its agents under Part II of the 1990 Act (Waste Strategy 2000 page 198 (Cm 4693–2)).

Mr. Bill O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she plans to extend the statutory duty on local authorities with regard to recycling and composting beyond 2005–06; and if she will make a statement. [146518]

Mr. Morley: The Government is committed to reviewing the national recycling targets this year, in light of the progress made by local authorities in meeting their 2003–04 Statutory Performance Standards for recycling and composting.

The review will include consideration of whether to set further statutory recycling targets for local authorities for the years beyond 2005–06, to succeed the current Statutory Performance Standards.

Mr. Bill O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many tonnes of material have been recycled as a direct result of the Waste and Resources Action Programme's activity; what the average cost to public funds was per tonne of such recycled material; and if she will make a statement. [146540]

Mr. Morley: WRAP'S market development programmes are delivering an extra 1,000,000 tonnes/year of additional recycling capacity in the UK, through projects that have been delivered or are close to completion.

It is estimated that all of the capital grant and R&D projects initiated by WRAP, once fully realised, will generate at least four million extra tonnes of recycling per year in the UK. If the reasonable assumption is made that this recycling will continue to be delivered for at least 10 years, the cost to the public purse is estimated to be approximately £1/tonne.

These estimates relate solely to WRAP'S R&D and capital interventions and not to WRAP'S advocacy and procurement work, which make essential contributions to the programme as a whole, but are not so easily related to tonnage figures.

Water Supplies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the water supply and urban and rural drainage bodies in England which are companies where a holding company or majority of shareholdings are not from the United Kingdom, stating in each case the country and name of the ultimate owner, together with date of acquisition. [145468]

Mr. Morley: The following table lists those water and sewerage and water undertakers that are owned by companies based outside the U.K., the country where the controlling company's head office is and the date of the acquisition. Information about the nationality of shareholders is not available.

Internal Drainage Boards in England have been established in areas of special drainage needs. They are public statutory bodies.

Water and sewerage undertakers	*Ultimate holding company and where headquarters is based*	*Date of acquisition*
Thames Water Utilities Ltd.	Thames Water Aqua Holdings GmbH (RWE AG) (Germany)	November 2000
Wessex Water Services Limited	YTL Power Berhad (Malaysia)	May 2002

Water only undertakers	*Ultimate holding company and where headquarters is based*	*Date of acquisition*
Cambridge Water plc.	Union Electricia Fenosa SA (Spain)	January 2004
Folkestone and Dover Water Services Ltd.	Veolia Environment (France)	February 2003
Tendring Hundred Water Services Ltd.	Veolia Environment(France)	Owned since before 1989
South East Water plc.	Macquarie Bank Ltd. (Australia)	October 2003
Three Valleys Water Services plc.	Veolia Environment (France)	Owned since before 1989

NORTHERN IRELAND

National Sports Stadium

5. **Mr. Grogan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Sports Council about a new national sports stadium for Northern Ireland. [146810]

Angela Smith: Support remains in principle for a national stadium but this must be assessed on the grounds of need, sustainability and on the involvement of a number of sports. I am able to confirm that there are on-going discussions with the Sports Council of Northern Ireland about a new national sports stadium. The sports council is also in touch with the governing bodies of the main sports to assess their willingness to use a national stadium bearing in mind that these sports are at various stages in planning for their future facility needs.

Infrastructure Investment

6. **Mr. Bailey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to increase investment in infrastructure in Northern Ireland. [146811]

Mr. Pearson: Yesterday I launched the Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2004–06, copies of which have been placed in the Library. This Document shows planned expenditure on capital investment will rise by 40 per cent. over the next two years.

Educational Attainment

7. **Helen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to improve educational attainment in disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland. [146812]

Jane Kennedy: The Government has instituted a wide range of measures to improve educational outcomes among children, young people and adults in disadvantaged areas. These include the School Support Programme, Group 1 schools, curriculum flexibility for work-related learning at Key Stage 4, and a number of Further Education initiatives.

I have also recently announced the creation of Education Action Zones aimed at tackling the root causes of educational failure within communities. All these initiatives contribute to the overarching policy of Targeting Social Need.

Skills Base

8. **Judy Mallaber:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on Government action to develop essential skills in Northern Ireland. [146813]

Jane Kennedy: The Essential Skills for Living Strategy and Action Plan was launched in October 2002. Our aim is to support 25,000 adults in Northern Ireland to improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2005. In the first year 6,500 learners were supported and we are on track to meet our target of supporting a further 8,000 learners by March 2004.

Good Friday Agreement

9. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the review of the Good Friday Agreement will commence. [146814]

Mr. Paul Murphy: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Carmichael).

Older People (Security)

10. **John Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on measures to improve the security of older people in Northern Ireland. [146815]

Mr. Spellar: The Government is committed to improving security for older people in Northern Ireland. A community safety strategy for older people will be issued for consultation in February 2004 supplemented by practical action through the Stay safe Stay secure campaign launched October 2003 and work in other agencies including the police.

Devolved Government

11. **John Barrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made towards the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland. [146816]

Mr. Paul Murphy: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Carmichael).

12. **Mr. Luke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress had been made since the November elections to create a working Northern Ireland Executive. [146817]

Mr. Paul Murphy: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Carmichael).

Peace Process

13. **Mr. Bill O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the peace process following the elections of the November 2003. [146818]

Mr. Paul Murphy: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Carmichael).

Broadband

14. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to increase investment in the broadband infrastructure in Northern Ireland. [146819]

Mr. Pearson: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is actively pursuing 100 per cent. broadband coverage across Northern Ireland by December 2005 through the award of a major contract for the provision of broadband services.

Tenders are at the final evaluation stage and an announcement on the award of the contract is planned for early this year.

Drug Smuggling

15. **Mr. Tynan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent assessment he has made of the success of measures to interdict the smuggling of drugs into Northern Ireland. [146820]

Jane Kennedy: The PSNI has had unprecedented success this year in preventing the importation of drugs into Northern Ireland. Drugs Squad officers have had their most successful year to date and I congratulate them for their work.

Some of the recent successes include the seizure of some £1 million worth of cocaine in Northern Ireland in October that led directly to the seizure of over £7 million in ecstasy tablets in Amsterdam by Dutch police. £2 million of cannabis was seized in August—the largest ever seizure of the drug in Northern Ireland and in September police officers seized cannabis resin with an estimated street value of £250,000 in Belfast.

This high level of seizures and arrests demonstrates the PSNI's and the Organised Crime Task Force's ongoing commitment and effectiveness in tackling this problem.

TRANSPORT

Airports (Scotland)

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Executive on the timescale for the construction of rail links to *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Edinburgh airports. [147689]

Mr. McNulty: The Department has held extensive discussions with the Scottish Executive on both proposals and has been kept informed of progress on the ongoing feasibility work.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received from environmental groups on the proposed expansion of Scottish airports. [147687]

Mr. McNulty: Environmental groups submitted 8 responses to the consultation document "The Future Development of Air Transport in the UK: Scotland". Since the consultation ended on 30 June 2003, we have received no further representations from such groups on the proposed expansion of Scottish airports.

British Charter Airlines (Kazakhstan)

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the reasons for the banning of British charter airlines from operating in Kazakhstan; what representations he has made on their behalf to the Kazakh Government; and if he will make a statement. [146828]

Mr. McNulty: Until December 2003, two UK registered airlines were operating one charter service per week to Atyrau and Uralsk in Western Kazakhstan on contract to oil and gas companies active in the region.

In early December 2003 that permission was revoked. The Kazakh authorities subsequently explained that they will no longer grant permission for these services because the new Kazakh airline, Air Astana, has now started services from Uralsk and Atyrau to Western Europe.

We are concerned that permission for these flights was terminated without due process and at very short notice, with great inconvenience to passengers and to the financial detriment of UK airlines. We are also concerned that UK airlines are being denied the opportunity to offer a competing service. We will pursue this issue further with the Kazakh authorities.

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the Kazakhstan Government regarding the prevention of UK charter flights from landing in Uralsk and Atyrau. [147537]

Mr. McNulty: Until December 2003, two UK registered airlines were operating one charter service per week to Atyrau and Uralsk in Western Kazakhstan on contract to oil and gas companies active in the region.

In early December 2003 that permission was revoked. The Kazakh authorities subsequently explained that they will no longer grant permission for these services because the new Kazakh airline, Air Astana, has now started services from Uralsk and Atyrau to Western Europe.

We are concerned that permission for these flights was terminated without due process and at very short notice, with great inconvenience to passengers and to the financial detriment of UK airlines. We are also concerned that UK airlines are being denied the opportunity to offer a competing service. We will pursue this issue further with the Kazakh authorities.

Deep Vein Thrombosis

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of the United States Transport Security Administration Directive issued on 24 December 2003 on the Government's advice to air travellers on how to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis during long haul flights. [147723]

Mr. McNulty: The Directive aims to prevent people congregating on board flights to the United States for security reasons. The Directive has no impact on the Government's advice on deep vein thrombosis, which encourages passengers to move their feet around or, if possible, to get up and walk around at intervals.

M60 (Flooding)

Andrew Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on *(a)* the causes of flooding on the M60 between Denton and Hollinwood and *(b)* progress in addressing the causes. [146836]

Mr. Jamieson: Areas of water seepage at a number of locations on the M60 have been identified. These areas have been inspected and testing of the road material has taken place. The Highways Agency are awaiting the results of spray and drainage investigations. These results together will be used to identify remedial works that may be necessary.

In the meantime, warning signs have been placed on part of the Denton-Middleton section of the M60 motorway to alert drivers to the possibility of excess water on the carriageway.

Railway Schemes

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the railway schemes being evaluated by his Department which involve *(a)* the laying of additional miles of track and *(b)* the re-opening of disused rail routes; and if he will make a statement. [147173]

Dr. Howells: The evaluation of such schemes is a matter for the Strategic Rail Authority, who set out their project portfolio in their Strategic Plan. A copy of the latest edition, published last year, is in the Library of the House.

Road Safety

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers local authorities have to erect 30 mph repeater signs on single carriageway roads with street lights. [147072]

Mr. Jamieson: Local authorities have no powers to erect 30 mph speed limit repeater signs on street lit roads as current legislation strictly prohibits it.

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate how many deaths there have been because of *(a)* dangerous driving, *(b)* driving under the influence of illegal drugs and *(c)* driving under the influence of alcohol in *(i)* Cambridgeshire and (ii) Huntingdon in each year since 2000. [146440]

Mr. Jamieson: The information is not available.

Rural Bus Services

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to prevent over-crowding on scheduled bus services taking pupils to school in rural areas; and if he will end the three for two rule. [146821]

Mr. Jamieson: Before a bus enters into service it is a requirement, under regulation 8 of the Public Service Vehicles (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984, that it has to be marked with the number of passengers, both standees and seated that it may safely carry. Both children and adults are considered as the same within these regulations. If these numbers are exceeded the vehicle would be deemed as operating illegally and then it becomes a matter for the enforcement agencies to pursue.

Currently there are no plans to abolish the three for two rule.

Street Works

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his latest estimate is of the cost to business of highway authority street works. [147098]

Mr. Jamieson: The Department does not hold figures of the costs to business of highway authority works. However, it is important to minimise the disruption caused by works in the street, regardless of whether they are carried out by utility companies or by highway authorities, and this is reflected in the range of measures included in the Traffic Management Bill.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes have been made to the enforcement of penalties for failure to display an up-to-date vehicle excise duty disc; and if he will make a statement. [146761]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* There are no changes to the penalties for the offence of failure to display a valid vehicle licence. Failure to display is normally enforced by fixed penalty.

A number of changes are being introduced to strengthen the enforcement of the requirement to license a vehicle (or to make a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) if a vehicle is being kept off the road). The registered keeper of a vehicle for which a licence or SORN has not been renewed one month after expiry is now liable for a penalty of £80 (reduced to £40 if paid within 28 days of receiving the penalty notice). To ensure that vehicle keepers have sufficient notice to check that their vehicles are properly licensed, extensive publicity is being given to the changes including information leaflets to all registered keepers during the final month of licence validity. The first penalty notices are likely to be issued in March, in respect of vehicles for which licences have not been renewed from 1 January 2004.

In the most serious cases, vehicle keepers can also be prosecuted for the new offence of being the keeper of an unlicensed vehicle.

Vehicles Inspectorate

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles have been stopped for roadside checks by the Vehicles Inspectorate in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how many *(a)* were found to have vehicle faults and *(b)* were motor cars or other non-commercial vehicles. [147235]

Dr. Howells: The number of vehicles stopped at the roadside by the Vehicle Inspectorate (now the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency) in 2002–03 and the percentage found to have roadworthiness faults are shown in the following tables. Further information and statistical analysis of the agency's work can be found in the Vehicle Inspectorate's Effectiveness Report 2002–03, a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Spot checks carried out by the Vehicle Inspectorate in 2002–2003

Vehicle Category	*Number of vehicles checked*	*Prohibition Rate[1] (%)* *Immediate prohibitions[2]*	*Delayed prohibitions[3]*
HGV Motor Vehicles[4]	64,373	9.2	12.7
HGV Trailers	21,225	9.4	16.6
HGV emissions checks	7,748	0.1	0.7
PSV vehicles[4]	20,287	6.9	8.2
PSV emissions checks	5,447	0.05	0.45

[1] Only one prohibition notice is issued per vehicle although it may contain a list of defects/offences where more than one has been found. The most serious defect/offence determines whether an immediate or delayed prohibition is issued.

[2] Immediate prohibition rate relates to all vehicles (including foreign vehicles).

[3] Delayed prohibition rate excludes checks on foreign vehicles. The Foreign Vehicles Act does not provide for the issue of delayed prohibitions to foreign vehicles.

[4] Excludes emissions only checks, but includes foreign vehicles.

Results of light vehicle roadside roadworthiness checks

Vehicle category	*Number examined*	*Number prohibited*	*Prohibition rate (%)*
Cars	4,942	2,223	45
Taxis and private hire cars	6,478	1,593	24.6
Non-testable vehicles[1]	2,836	1,666	58.7
Light Goods Vehicles	16,498	6,061	36.7

[1] Non-testable vehicles include mobile cranes, diggers and non-HGV trailers

Results of light vehicle spot checks for emissions

Vehicle category	*Number examined*	*Prohibition rate (%)* *Petrol Engine*	*Diesel Engine*
Cars	58,044	6.1	3.1
Taxis and private hire cars	2,374	5.1	6.5
Light Goods Vehicles	10,089	7.7	3.7

WALES

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the total expenditure on *(a)* information campaigns and *(b)* advertising was for his Department in each year since 1997. [145383]

Mr. Hain: My department has run no television, newspaper, radio advertising or any other kind of promotional campaign since its creation in July 1999. It has no agencies or departmental public bodies within its responsibilities. We are not responsible for campaigns that may be run by the National Assembly or other Government Departments in Wales.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of staff in his Department contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143900]

Mr. Touhig: The Give as You Earn scheme is available to Wales Office staff and is regularly drawn to their attention. No staff currently contribute to charity through the scheme.

This does not fully reflect the charitable activities of Wales Office staff.

Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in his Department in the last 12 months. [147905]

Mr. Hain: None.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Guantanamo Bay

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the US Government since the state visit of President Bush in connection with the British detainees at Guantanamo Bay; and if he will make a statement. [146501]

Mr. Mullin *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* Since the recent visit of President Bush to the UK, the position of the British nationals detained at Guantanamo Bay has continued to be the subject of discussions between the government and the US administration. We hope to resolve the situation soon.

Israel

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is his policy to seek to persuade Israel to divest itself of all its weapons of mass destruction. [147402]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The UK government has consistently urged Israel to clarify its nuclear status by acceding to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state, and signing a full-scope safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We urge Israel to ratify both the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The UK has also consistently supported UN Resolutions calling for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. That zone would include Israel.

Pakistan

Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's policy regarding the return of Pakistan to full membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. [147543]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The United Kingdom wants to see Pakistan readmitted to the Councils of the Commonwealth, including to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

However, it is the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) that will make a decision whether to recommend to Commonwealth Heads of Government that Pakistan should be readmitted on the basis of its return to democracy. The UK is not a member of CMAG, but the UK Government believes that the recent agreement between the Pakistani Government and opposition over the country's constitution and role of parliament marks an important step in the country's transition to full democracy. We hope this will facilitate progress on joining the full Councils of the Commonwealth.

Thailand

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the advice given to UK visitors to Thailand. [146481]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not advise against travel to Thailand. The vast majority of visits to Thailand are trouble-free. But due to a general threat to British and other Western targets from terrorism in South East Asia, including Thailand, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises that travellers should be particularly vigilant in public places, including tourist sites. It also advises travellers to watch out for crimes of opportunity and against the possession of even small quantities of drugs. The full Travel Advice for Thailand can be viewed on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website at www.fco.gov.uk.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Education (Hemsworth)

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the percentage of the population of Hemsworth constituency who have NVQ levels *(a)* 1, *(b)* 2 and *(c)* 3. [147456]

Alan Johnson: The following table shows analysis of the qualification levels of the working age[1] population in the parliamentary constituency of Hemsworth. This is presented alongside England average data for comparison. Data comes from the Local Labour Force Survey for 2001–02.

[1] Working age population refers to males aged 16–64 and females aged 16–59.

Percentage

Qualification level	*Hemsworth*	*England*
NVQ 4 and above	16.2	23.5
NVQ 3	12.6	14.8
Trade Apprenticeships	9.3	7.0
NVQ 2	15.4	18.1
Below NVQ Level 2	21.3	20.5
No qualifications	25.3	16.0

Higher Education

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment his Department has made of the effect on equality of opportunity for students of competition between higher education institutions on price. [147240]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* In his statement to the House on student support in higher education on 8 January my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Skills announced a package of support the purpose of which is to ensure that no student from a poor background would be worse off as a result of proposals in the Higher Education Bill, whichever university they attend and whatever the fee charged for the course. Higher Education institutions wishing to charge higher fees will have to enter into an access agreement with the Office for Fair Access. These access agreements will set out the measures that institutions will take to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not deterred from higher education because of higher fees. My right hon. Friend also said that the Government would establish an independent review, working with the Office for Fair Access, to report to the House on the impact of variable fees, based upon the first three years of their operation.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students are enrolled on courses at higher education institutions in the north-west. [143453]

Alan Johnson: The available information is given in the table.

All higher education enrolments[1, 2] at north-west higher education institutions, 2001–02

Institution region	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
North West GOR[3]	104,944	45,037	149,981
Total England[4]	1,003,229	591,138	1,594,367

[1] Snapshot as at 1 December.
[2] Includes students from both home and overseas domiciles and covers enrolments to all levels of higher education course.
[3] Government Office Region.
[4] Including higher education institutions in the north-west and the Open University.
Source:
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Student Drop-out Rate

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the most recent figures are for the drop-out rate for English university students is in their *(a)* 1st year of study, *(b)* 2nd year of study, *(c)* 3rd year of study and *(d)* further years of study. [143250]

Alan Johnson: The available information on the non-continuation of students beyond the first year in each university, and the projected course non-completion rate in each university is contained in "Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK", published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, a copy of which is available from the House Library. The latest edition, published in December 2003, gives figures for students starting full-time degree courses in the United Kingdom in 2000/01. Table 3 shows that 9 per cent. of students did not continue beyond the first year, and that the projected non-completion rate over the whole course was 16 per cent.

No data are held covering those students who drop out of their course after two or three years. Nationally, the non-completion rate has remained broadly the same since 1991/92, a period of considerable expansion of student numbers.

Figures published in 2003 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that the UK has one of the lowest non-completion rates among OECD countries.

Universities

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many people domiciled in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* the City of Edinburgh local authority area and *(c)* the Edinburgh West parliamentary constituency are attending a (i) English and (ii) Welsh university. [142620]

Alan Johnson: Data for students who enter HE are not collated centrally by constituency. The latest available data are shown in the following table.

Domicile of student by location of institution 2001/02

Domicile	*Location of higher education institution* *England*	*Wales*
Scotland	26,456	672
City of Edinburgh	3,798	90

Source:
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much income the university sector has earned from business in each year since 1997, broken down by university. [143135]

Alan Johnson: Details of the income of higher education institutions by source is published annually by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in "Resources of Higher Education Institutions", copies of which are available in the House Library. Table 3 shows separately for each higher education institution income from UK industry, commerce and public corporations, although this does not include income from intellectual property rights which are shown separately in Table 4.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many people from Cunninghame, South enrolled to study at a university in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2002 and *(c)* 2003; and how many failed to complete their course. [141929]

Alan Johnson: Enrolment figures at constituency level are not currently available. However, higher education enrolment figures from the county of North Ayrshire for the most recent three years are given in the table.

HE enrolments from North Ayrshire

Academic year	*Enrolments*
1999/00	3,405
2000/01	3,366
2001/02	3,469

Source:
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Non-completion rates are published annually by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 'Performance Indicators in Higher Education' and cover home domiciled students starting full-time first degree courses. The latest figure covers students starting courses in 2000/01, shows that non-completion rates in the UK are 16 per cent. HEFCE do not publish non-completion rates by any geographical breakdown.

University Tuition Fees

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what his estimate is of annual net income to *(a)* Russell Group and *(b)* other universities from the proposed tuition fees after all costs and concessions are taken into account. [147601]

Alan Johnson: Information on the costs and benefits associated with the proposal in the Higher Education Bill to allow universities to set their own tuition fees is contained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment published on 8 January alongside the Bill. The Regulatory Impact Assessment illustrates the income from additional fees in different scenarios. Because of the nature of a variable scheme, the costs vary greatly according to the decisions that higher education institutions take, and they cannot be estimated precisely at this stage. The Regulatory Impact Assessment does not distinguish between individual universities. Copies of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

PRIME MINISTER

Social Behaviour

15. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what action the Government have taken to improve social behaviour; and if he will make a statement. [147494]

The Prime Minister: We have taken a number of measures to improve social behaviour. These include introducing citizenship education into primary schools in 2000 and making citizenship education a statutory part of the secondary school National Curriculum in September 2002. We have also tackled the problem of anti-social behaviour through our introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act.

Appointments Commission

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister when he last met the Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission to discuss its work. [147959]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 16 May 2003, *Official Report*, column 439W.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his answer of 18 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1076W, on People's Peers, whether he is now in a position to invite the House of Lords Appointments Commission to recommend names for the second round of People's Peers. [147961]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to my previous answer.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum/Immigration

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been taken into care as a result of paragraph 1 of schedule 3 to the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002; and whether the Home Department have ever referred the possible placing of a child into care to any local authority social services authority. [142325]

Beverley Hughes: No children have been taken into care as a result of the operation of paragraph 1 of Schedule 3; nor have the Home Office referred the possible placing of a child into care to any local authority Social Services authority in connection with this legislation.

Mr. Dawson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many failed asylum seekers with children are facing removal from the United Kingdom. [143802]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 15 December 2003]:* The information requested is unavailable, partly because it is not possible to determine the number of unsuccessful asylum seekers who leave the United Kingdom voluntarily without informing the Immigration Service of their departure.

Information on asylum applications, decisions, appeals and removals is published regularly on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate web site at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* asylum cases and *(b)* immigration cases were heard by (i) the Court of Appeal and (ii) the House of Lords in the latest year for which figures are available. [143845]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 15 December 2003]:* During the period from 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003, nine immigration cases were heard by the Court of Appeal (five asylum cases and four non-asylum) and four cases were heard by the House of Lords (three asylum cases and one non-asylum).

Information on these cases can be obtained from the website: http://www.lawreports.co.uk

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy concerning the best interests of children of asylum seekers with respect to *(a)* removal centres and *(b)* other circumstances for which he has jurisdiction. [142717]

Beverley Hughes: The best interests of children of asylum seekers will always be a key consideration in all dealings the Immigration and Nationality Directorate has with asylum-seeking families .

With respect to removal centres, rule 11 (3) of the Detention Centre Rules 2001 requires removal centre operators to provide everything reasonably necessary for detained persons' protection, safety and well-being and for the maintenance and care of infants and children.

Children who are accommodated in a removal centre as part of a family group are not separated from their parents or siblings and so are able to receive familial comfort and emotional support. Provision is made to ensure that they are safe; they are able to eat well; they are accommodated in quiet, warm bedrooms; they are occupied during the day; they have access to the fresh air, outside play areas, and are able to undertake physical exercise; they also have access to an excellent healthcare facility.

In the community, local authorities in the UK have duties towards all children in need, including the children of asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications were made asking for leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and of these, how many were granted leave. [142581]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 December 2003]:* Data on the number of appeals received and determined by the Immigration Appeals Tribunal, as well as the outcome from Tribunal hearings, in each of the last five years, are given in the following table. The latter data does not necessarily correspond to the number of applications for leave to appeal in any given year.

Information on how many applications for leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal were granted is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Statistics on appeals to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal are published annually. The latest publication, "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2002", is available on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Asylum Appeals: Further appeals to the Tribunal, decisions, and the outcome of Tribunal Hearings, excluding dependants, 1994 to 2002[1]

Number of principal appellants

	1998	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*[2]
Applications for leave to appeal to the Tribunal[3]					
Applications	10,910	8,635	6,020	15,540	25,600
Decisions	[4]10,315	9,575	5,490	13,540	22,825
Appeals to the Tribunal3					
Received	[4]1,775	2,135	1,615	3,860	6,920
Determined	1,090	1,790	2,635	3,190	5,565
Outcome of Tribunal Hearings3					
Allowed	[4]—	—	815	475	620
Dismissed	—	—	1,385	1,140	2,015
Withdrawn	—	—	220	150	225
Remitted to adjudicators for further consideration	—	—	215	1,430	2,700

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest five. Numbers might not add up due to rounding.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] Figures based on data supplied by the Lord Chancellor's Department. Decisions and determinations do not necessarily correspond to applications and appeals received in any given year.
[4] Revised figures.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications were made by his Department asking for leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and, of these, how many were granted leave. [142583]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 December 2003]:* The information requested is not available because data on the number of applications for leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal are not separately compiled in relation to whom the appeal is sought by and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The latest available data on total applications for leave to appeal to the Tribunal and the outcomes from hearings at the Tribunal in each of the last five years are given in the following table. The table shows the total number of applications and decisions for leave to appeal

to the Tribunal, the number of appeals received and determined and the outcomes of Tribunal hearings broken down by appellant and Secretary of State. Decisions and determinations do not necessarily correspond to applications and appeals in any given year.

Statistics on appeals to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal are published annually. The latest publication, "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2002", is available on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

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[4] Revised figures.

Outcome of Tribunal Hearings[1]

Number of principal appellants

	Appellant Allowed	*Secretary of State Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*
1998	—	—	—	—	—	—
1999	—	—	—	—	—	—
2000	650	1,225	185	170	165	35
2001	315	1,020	125	160	120	25
2002[2]	410	1,880	210	215	130	15

[1] Figures supplied by the Presenting Officers Unit. Figures for October–December 1999 are based on data for November-December.
[2] Provisional figures.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of families likely to be affected by Clause 7 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill. [143406]

Beverley Hughes: Clause 7 will only affect failed asylum seekers and their families who refuse to take advantage of voluntary return arrangements, or to put themselves in a position to do so, without good cause. The precise number who have support stopped will depend upon the decisions made by individual families.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason he has not yet replied to the letter sent to him dated 18 September 2003 by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mr. Sattler. [140781]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to the right hon. Member on 8 January 2004.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to K.Akhtar. [144643]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to the right hon. Member on 12 January 2004.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 30 October from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs.J.Ferns. [144644]

Mr. Blunkett: I responded to the right hon. Member on 16 December 2003.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Jamie Sanderson. [144646]

Mr. Blunkett: I responded to the right hon. Member on 31 December 2003.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter to him dated 6 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Kwok Hung Lam. [145962]

Mr. Blunkett: I responded to the right hon. Member on 23 December 2003.

Drug Misuse

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the proportion of those convicted of drug misuse offences who had previously been in local authority care in each of the last five years. [147335]

Caroline Flint: No figures are available on the proportion of those convicted of drug misuse offences that have previously been in local authority care.

Firearm Offences

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are in place to reduce the number of firearm offences. [146268]

Caroline Flint: Our developing programme to tackle gun crime includes:

tackling the links to drug supply and crime;

reducing the supply and availability of firearms;

effective police operations to drive down firearm offences;

tough laws and effective enforcement; and

engaging the worst affected communities to address the underlying gun culture.

We are working closely with the police and other agencies to ensure that the lessons learned from their experience in tackling gun crime are built upon. A detailed action plan to keep action to tackle gun crime at the forefront of the police agenda has been developed and is being implemented.

In addition, the National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database, launched on 25 November 2003, will provide a central database of seized weapons and help trace guns used in crimes and improve detection.

We are also engaging with communities to help steer young people away from gun crime and gun culture. We are:

providing support for the Disarm Trust, which is providing direct support for community groups working to reduce gun crime, supporting victims of gun crime and providing help for witnesses;

allocating £1.2 million of recovered assets receipts to help tackle gun crime; and

running a major event on 19 to 20 January 2004, which will bring together community representatives, activists, voluntary groups and young people, leading to a sustained community-focused campaign against gun crime and gun culture.

This action will be supported by the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which will see a mandatory minimum sentence of five years imprisonment for possession or distribution of prohibited weapons or ammunition, and by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, which will raise the age limit to 17 for owning air weapons, ban the possession of air weapons and imitations in public without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, and ban the possession, sale and import of self contained air cartridge weapons.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were heard by Immigration Appellate Authority adjudicators in the last 12 months; and in how many cases an appeal was taken to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal. [143269]

Beverley Hughes: The number of cases heard by Immigration Appellate Authority adjudicators, for the latest 12-month period for which data are available, are given in the following table. Information on the number of those cases that were taken to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal following successful applications for leave to appeal to the Tribunal are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual case files.

Statistics on the number of asylum appeals heard by the Immigration Appellate Authority are published quarterly. The most recent publication covering the third quarter of 2003 is now available from the Library of the House or on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website athttp://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Asylum Appeals determined by adjudicators of the Immigration Appellate Authority, excluding dependants[1]

Number of principal appellants

				Appeals determined by adjudicators					
				Allowed[2]		*Dismissed*[2]		*Withdrawn*[2]	
	Appeals received by the Home Office[3, 4]	*Appeals received by the IAA*[5]	*Total determined*[4]	*Total*	*As % of total determined*	*Total*	*As % of total determined*	*Total*	*As % of total determined*
2003									
Q1	[2]12,600	18,090	20,595	3,480	17	16,445	80	670	3
Q2	[2]10,800	17,835	19,345	4,060	21	14,875	77	415	2
Q3	[2]10,900	18,330	21,500	4,270	20	16,805	78	420	2
Latest 12 months									
October	4,965	4,475	5,980	1,170	20	4,620	77	190	3
November	3,740	6,080	5,585	1,185	21	4,270	76	130	2
December	3,575	6,110	5,050	960	19	3,920	78	170	3
January	[2]3,400	6,015	7,210	1,265	18	5,690	79	255	4
February	[2]4,000	6,025	6,545	975	15	5,350	82	220	3

Asylum Appeals determined by adjudicators of the Immigration Appellate Authority, excluding dependants[1]

Number of principal appellants

	Appeals received by the Home Office[3,4]	*Appeals received by the IAA*[5]	*Total determined*[4]	*Appeals determined by adjudicators: Allowed*[2] *Total*	*Allowed as % of total determined*	*Dismissed*[2] *Total*	*Dismissed as % of total determined*	*Withdrawn*[2] *Total*	*Withdrawn as % of total determined*
March	[2]5,200	6,045	6,840	1,235	18	5,405	79	200	3
April	[2]3,700	5,825	7,010	1,445	21	5,455	78	110	2
May	[2]3,400	6,025	6,035	1,265	21	4,655	77	115	2
June	[2]3,600	5,985	6,300	1,345	21	4,765	76	190	3
July	[2]4,100	6,005	8,195	1,655	20	6,375	78	165	2
August	[2]3,000	6,080	6,740	1,320	20	5,275	78	145	2
September	[2]3,700	6,240	6,565	1,295	20	5,155	79	110	2
Total	[2]46,485	70,920	78,050	15,130	19	60,930	78	1,995	3

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest five (other than percentages). Numbers might not add up due to rounding.
[2] Based on data supplied from the Presenting Officers Unit within the Home Office.
[3] Data are based on manual counts of data received in Appeals Support Section (ASS) of the Home Office. Some cases are received elsewhere in the Home Office before being forwarded to ASS and so may be counted in a later month than when they arrived in the Home Office.
[4] Estimate. Figures rounded to the nearest hundred, and subject to later revision.
[5] Based on information supplied by the Lord Chancellor's Department. Determinations do not necessarily relate to appeals received in the same period.

Merseyside Crime Initiative Unit

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the findings were of the Diversity Monitoring Project established in October 2001 to examine Merseyside Crown Prosecution Service files for racial bias in decision-making. [146245]

The Solicitor-General: I have been asked to reply.

The question has been transferred to me for reply as the Law Officers have responsibility for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

The findings of the Diversity Monitoring Project, an independent study into racial or gender bias in the decision making processes of the CPS, were published in the executive summary report 'Race for Justice' on 21 October 2003. The full report will be available by the end of March 2004.

12,913 CPS files were examined to establish if race or gender bias or discrimination occurred in the prosecution process. Merseyside was one of 10 CPS areas whose files were examined by the researchers. The files were taken randomly from a wide geographical spread of areas to ensure a representative sample. The report sets out the aggregated findings from the 10 area sample and does not set out findings for individual areas.

The report outlines nine recommendations, applicable to the whole organisation, which have been accepted by CPS and which they have developed an action plan to implement.

Prison Service

Dr. Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Prison Service has to introduce a public interest immunity policy. [145090]

Paul Goggins: There are no plans to introduce a policy specific to the Prison Service. Public interest immunity is a rule of evidence and its application is no different for Prison Service business than for any other business of Government.

The Secretary of State will continue to seek public interest immunity where he considers that material which is relevant in civil or criminal proceedings should not be disclosed because the harm to the public interest that would arise from its disclosure outweighs the harm to the interests of justice that might arise from not disclosing it in those proceedings. It is always for the court to decide whether the Secretary of State's claim to public interest immunity should be upheld.

Wetherby Young Offenders Institution

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what the cost per prisoner place at Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Wetherby was in *(a)* 1998–99 and *(b)* 2002–03; [145649]

(2) what the actual cost per prisoner at Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Wetherby was in *(a)* 1998–99 and *(b)* 2002–03. [145650]

Paul Goggins: The cost per prison place and cost per prisoner at Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Wetherby for the years 1998–99 and 2002–03 are given in the table.

	Cost per prisoner place	*Cost per prisoner*
1998–99	£18,745	£20,827
2002–03	28,226	29,661

Note:
The figures for 1998–99 are expressed in cash terms, while those for 2002–03 are expressed in resource terms. As such, they are not directly comparable given the change in the accounting basis, but an alternative figure for 2002–03 that is broadly comparable with the 1998–99 figures would be £26,705 for the cost per prisoner place and £28,029 for the cost per prisoner.

DEFENCE

Atlantic Crusader

Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department have chartered the Atlantic Crusader ship. [147411]

Mr. Ingram: The Atlantic Crusader is currently chartered to the Ministry of Defence and is conducting a Falkland Island re-supply voyage.

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the pathogens that the United Kingdom will not export as a signatory of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. [146965]

Nigel Griffiths: I have been asked to reply.

A list of the pathogens controlled for export from the UK is contained in Council Regulation (EC) No 1334/2000, as amended (available from: http://www.dti.gov.uk/export.control/pdfs/1159_annex1.pdf). There is no embargo on the export of pathogens from the UK. All licence applications to export these pathogens from the UK to destinations outside the EU are considered on a case-by-case basis against the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria.

Civil Contingency Reaction Force

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what impact the reduction in training days will have on the readiness of the Civil Contingency Reaction Force; and if he will make a statement. [146849]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial statement I gave on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 18WS. The reduction in training days will not affect readiness of the 14 Civil Contingency Reaction Forces.

Demobilised Reservists

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support is available to recently demobilised reservists who suffer stress related illnesses related to the difficulty of readjusting to civilian life.[R] [147037]

Mr. Caplin: The MOD and Department of Health officials are working together to maximise the delivery of mental health services to all Veterans. Those reservists who deployed to Iraq during OP TELIC can be seen at the Gulf Veterans' Medical Assessment Programme (GVMAP) on referral by their doctor. Where appropriate, the Programme will refer them to a country-wide network of specialist psychiatrists and psychologists for expert assessment and diagnosis. The GVMAP pays for this, including the patient's travel costs.

In addition, at the end of each deployment all personnel, including reservists, undergo a period of "normalisation" as a measure to minimise the possibility of stress related disorders. They also receive a presentation about post traumatic stress reactions and are given information leaflets, covering post traumatic stress reactions and the problems which may be encountered on returning home. Reservists will also be provided with details of service related charities such as Combat Stress, SSAFA and the RBL.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible relocation of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement; [146930]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146885]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146899]

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement. [146869]

Mr. Caplin: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W, by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Eurofighter Typhoon

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been conducted to ascertain the change in unit cost of Eurofighter Typhoon should the third tranche of the original order not be purchased; what savings could be expected from the cancellation of the third tranche; and if he will make a statement. [146851]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 13 May 2003, *Official Report*, column 154W; the situation remains the same.

Iraq

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of British troops are engaged in security duties for American commercial and business interests in Iraq. [146573]

Mr. Ingram: None.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the anti-malarial treatment mefloquine hydrochloride has been issued to UK forces serving in Iraq. [148291]

Mr. Caplin: The anti-malarial treatment mefloquine hydrochloride was not issued to United Kingdom forces serving in Iraq. The stated malarial prophylaxis for Iraq is Chloroquine/Paludrine.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the roulement of UK forces in Iraq. [143735]

Mr. Ingram: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 18 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 755W, to the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor).

Medical Supplies Agency

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures are in place to ensure that suitably

qualified personnel are used by military units in the ordering, delivery, storage and use of materials, equipment, drugs and other medical items; and if he will make a statement. [145350]

Mr. Caplin: Training is provided prior to taking up post and through continuous personal development to ensure that all personnel employed by the Ministry of Defence in medical supply and storage are suitably qualified. Medical personnel who control the use of medical materiel and equipment are also appropriately trained.

MOD Police Pensions

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons in receipt of a pension for the MOD police were previously employed in the armed forces without any break in employment service. [147684]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Scottish Regiments

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the *(a)* Black Watch, *(b)* King's Own Scottish Borderers and *(c)* Royal Scots regiments. [147680]

Mr. Ingram: There are currently no plans regarding the future of any of these Regiments. The Defence White Paper published last month provides the policy context for shaping the structure of our armed forces. Subsequently, the details of individual systems and units within that structure will need to be developed, but presently no decisions have been taken.

Service Children's Education

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place between his Department, the Department for Education and Skills and the Treasury regarding the funding of local education authority schools which have a significant number of pupils from service families. [147137]

Mr. Caplin: Funding of local education authority schools is a matter for the Department for Education and Skills and the relevant departments in the devolved Administrations. We have frequent contact with the Department for Education and Skills to discuss the issues faced by schools with children from the Service population and ensure that the provision meets their educational requirements.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent estimate he has made of the number of children from service families being educated in local education authority-maintained schools. [147142]

Mr. Caplin: We do not hold statistics on the type of school attended by dependent children from service families. However, we estimate that there are between 80,000 and 100,000 attending state schools in the UK.

Service Pensions

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what date he expects work on illustrative models for the proposed armed forces pensions early departure scheme to be completed; and when he will publish the models. [147131]

Mr. Caplin: Work on the detailed design of the new Early Departure Payment (EDP) payments model is now close to being finalised. I will provide further information on our plans shortly.

Type-45 Destroyers

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the in-service dates are for each of the Type 45 Destroyers. [146852]

Mr. Ingram: Six Type 45 Destroyers are currently on order. The currently approved in service date for the First of Class, HMS Daring, is November 2007, although this date is currently under review. The remaining ships are planned to enter service at intervals up to the end of 2011.

CABINET OFFICE

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on his Office's ability to meet its policy objectives. [146874]

Mr. Alexander: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury gave her on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Ms Walley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many staff in his Office work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146913]

Mr. Alexander: As at 2 January 2004, there were 20 staff working in the West Midlands and no staff working (full-time equivalents) in the North Staffordshire area.

Duchy of Lancaster

Mr. Evans: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the total value is of Duchy grants that have been disbursed to the north west in the last year. [147780]

Mr. Alexander: I am not a Trustee of the Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund. However, the Secretary of the Fund has provided the following information :

> Grants made from the Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund during the financial year ending 31 March 2003 amounted to £231,277.

Government Information and Communication Service

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to his answer of 6 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 221W, on Government Information and Communication Service, if he will break down the total sum quoted by budget head; and what the figures were for each year from 1996. [147398]

Mr. Alexander: Financial allocations to the GICS centre in 2003–04 consist of:

	£000
Head of Profession (including secretariat)	262
Development centre (recruitment and career & professional development for members)	808
Operations Unit (cross-cutting emergency communications)	1,388
Total	2,458

Allocations to the GICS and its predecessors (the Information Officer Management Unit and the Government Information Service) were:

	Total (£000)
1996–97	607
1997–98	575
1998–99	680
1999–2000	815
2000–01	962
2001–02	1,888
2002–03	4,079
2003–04	2,458

The role and responsibilities of the GICS in the Cabinet Office have evolved and developed since 1996.

The GICS covered Emergency Communications Co-ordination from 2001–02 and HM Queen's Jubilee Media facilities in 2002–03.

The GICS also funded a full-time Head of Profession from 1998 to December 2003.

The Media Monitoring Unit also became part of GICS centre finances in April 1999 and the Government News Network in April 2002. Both charge other Government Departments for their services and so require no budget allocation.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Antisocial Behaviour Orders

Chris Ruane: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many hours, and what budgets were allocated, for *(a)* training of magistrates and *(b)* training of magistrates clerks on antisocial behaviour orders in each magistrate authority, listed in descending order according to average amount spent on training for magistrates clerks since the introduction of antisocial behaviour orders. [144832]

Mr. Leslie: The specific information requested is not collected or held centrally and could be researched and provided in the format requested only at disproportionate cost. Statutory responsibility for the training of magistrates currently rests with the 42 independent Magistrates Courts Committees (MCCs).

For magistrates, MCCs generally incorporated Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) training into Bench meetings, new magistrate training days and other meetings or training events. The JSB produced training materials on ASBOs from within existing budgets, and the majority of MCCs report having used these along with their own written guidance notes, which they issued to all magistrates.

Training for magistrates clerks was similarly delivered by most MCCs through regular meetings. Where MCCs provided information about time spent on ASBO issues, between one-and-a-half to two hours had been allocated at meetings, not including preparation and private study by individual clerks and legal advisers.

Boundary Changes

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs when the Government plan to implement the boundary changes recommended by the Boundary Commission when it reports its findings. [147691]

Mr. Raynsford: I have been asked to reply.

The Boundary Commission for England is required to submit its final report by 12 April 2007 and the Boundary Commission for Wales, by 16 December 2006. It is a matter for the Commissions when, within that timescale, they do so. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is required by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 to lay the reports before Parliament, together with draft Orders in Council giving them effect, with or without modifications, as soon as may be thereafter.

Justice System (Costs)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what steps the Government are taking to cut *(a)* costs and *(b)* waste in the justice system. [146676]

Mr. Leslie: The question covers a wide range of initiatives being undertaken by Government Departments and agencies involved in the justice system and could be answered fully only at disproportionate cost.

In this Department the principal measures to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system include: the creation of the unified courts administration in April 2005, combining the present Court Service with the magistrates' courts; the Tribunal for Users Programme that will create a single new agency responsible for the majority of tribunal; and savings of £210 million in legal aid to be made over the three years to March 2006 from very high cost criminal cases and asylum, civil and criminal legal aid generally.

Magistrates Courts

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what effect combining magistrates courts with criminal jurisdictions and magistrates courts with civil and family jurisdictions has had, particularly with reference to shared waiting room facilities. [147665]

Mr. Leslie: When magistrates courts combine courts with criminal jurisdictions with courts with civil and family jurisdictions, they will routinely offer separate

waiting facilities where practicable. However, there may be local and unavoidable circumstances when those waiting for criminal and civil and family hearings are required to share facilities.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Departmental Policies

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the impact of her Department's policies on the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington, North since 1997. [145419]

Mr. Caborn: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport seeks to improve the quality of life for everyone through improved access to the best in cultural and sporting activities. The Department also champions the tourism, creative and leisure industries. The Department's policies have had a significant impact on the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington, North since 1 May 1997. For example, Arts Council England funds a diverse range of arts organisations and projects in the constituency. In 2005–06, regularly funded arts organisations in Regent's Park and Kensington North will receive a total of £813,278—an increase of 12 per cent. from 2003–04. These include:

The Union Dance Company and Trust, which will receive an Arts Council award of £250,065 in 2005–06—an increase of 22.1 per cent. from 2003–04;

The London Print Studio (LPS), which will receive an Arts Council award of £181,800 in 2005–06—an increase of 5.1 per cent. since 2003–04;

Paddington Arts, which will receive an Arts Council award of £50,000 in 2005–06—an increase of 5.9 per cent. since 2003–05.

The Regent's Park, one of the eight Royal Parks, lies within this constituency. The park provides a wide range of amenities, including sports pitches for cricket, hockey, softball, football and rounders, tennis courts, golf practice facilities, boating and a running track. The Royal Parks Agency, an executive agency of DCMS, has obtained grants of £780,000 from the Football Foundation and £500,000 from Sport England to reinstate the sports pitches and to build a new pavilion. Work is underway on reinstating the pitches and is expected to be completed by October 2004. This funding also provides for a Sports Development Officer to work with local authorities to involve children from deprived backgrounds from all over London in sporting activities.

The Royal Parks Agency also provides free entertainment every summer between June and September in The Regent's Park. This includes brass bands, music from the Caribbean and North Africa, opera, open air art and photography exhibitions.

In addition to Government spending, the constituency of Regent's Park and Kensington, North has received 398 National Lottery awards since 1 May 1997, with a total value of £39.865 million. The awards include:

A Sport England award of £8,778,720 to the North Kensington Amenity Trust for the extension of facilities at Westway Sports Centre (November 1999);

A Sport England award of £1,536,069 to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for a new sports hall and the upgrading of changing and ancillary facilities (May 2000).

The residents of Regent's Park and Kensington, North also have ready access to a wealth of national cultural institutions in London, including the English National Opera, the National Gallery and the British Museum.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what assessment her Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to north Staffordshire; and if she will make a statement; [146872]

(2) what assessment she has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146888]

(3) what assessment her Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in her Department to north Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if she will make a statement; [146903]

(4) what plans she has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible relocation of staff in her Department to the regions; and if she will make a statement. [146933]

Mr. Caborn: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in how many speeches during 2003 she declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147292]

Mr. Caborn: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516–17W.

Historic Wrecks

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what proportion of those on the Advisory Committee for Historic Wreck Sites are *(a)* vocational divers and *(b)* archaeologists; [145776]

(2) who the members of the Advisory Committee for Historic Wreck Sites are; and what practical experience each member has in diving for historic wrecks. [145818]

Mr. Caborn: The Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites includes members and observers drawn from a wide constituency of interests related to historic shipwrecks.

Jonathan Adams a diver and archaeologist has been carrying out archaeological investigations on historic wrecks since 1979, including the Mary Rose, the Grace Dieu and the Amsterdam.

Dr. Lucy Blue an archaeologist and diver has been working on submerged sites for 15 years.

Stuart Bryan is the Sub-Aqua Association's Nautical Archaeology Co-ordinator, and has widespread experience of vocationally diving on submerged archaeological sites.

Dr. Alexzandra Hildred a diver and archaeologist has been carrying out archaeological investigations on historic wrecks since 1979, including the Mary Rose.

Jonathan Parlour is a vocational diving member of a licensed team carrying out archaeological surveys of the Coronation sites off Plymouth, which are both designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

Dr. Mark Redknap is an archaeologist and the diving curator of the National Museum of Wales, and has extensive experience of diving on historic wrecks including leading a team of volunteers to carry out excavations on the Cattewater wreck. He also led an expedition to the Smalls Reef, and has dived on the Mary Rose and Stirling Castle wrecks.

Robin Daniels is an archaeologist and is the non-diving licensee of a designated wreck site. As this is in the intertidal zone, diving is not necessary.

Margaret Deacon is a non-diving representative of the oceanographic research community.

Patrick Griggs is a non-diving marine law specialist.

Wendy Robinson is a non-diving expert in the first-aid conservation of finds from the marine environment.

The Department intends to appoint an additional recreational diving representative on the Committee in early 2004.

Microsoft (Licensing Fees)

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport whether a decision has been taken as to whether her Department intends to continue paying Microsoft for licensing fees in future years; and if she will make a statement. [147550]

Mr. Caborn: No decision has been taken yet on Microsoft licensing.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport why the amount paid by her Department to Microsoft in licensing fees rose from £9,500 in 2001–02 to £234,000 in 2002–03. [147551]

Mr. Caborn: The license fee increased because the Department moved to MS Office, implemented Microsoft's Content Management Server software as part of the redevelopment of the Department's website and took out upgrade protection on Microsoft products under the OGC agreement with the aim of reducing any costs that might accrue from Microsoft's new charging arrangements commonly known as Licensing 6.0.

Procurement (Outsourcing)

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on her Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether her Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries her Department has outsourced these jobs; how much her Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147581]

Mr. Caborn: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport follows central guidance from OGC on procurement policy. No IT jobs are outsourced to offshore companies and this Department does not operate any call centres. The Department spent £1.2 million on outsourcing in 2001–02, £1.3 million in 2002–03 and the budget for the next two years is in line with previous years.

Scottish Television

Mr. Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to help introduce more viewing of Scottish television in Northern Ireland. [147043]

Estelle Morris: The BBC Scotland television service and ITV Scottish, Grampian and Border services are already available to those consumers in Northern Ireland with digital satellite receiving equipment. The extension of Scottish region television services to other areas in the UK is not possible on terrestrial television because of technical and licensing constraints.

Tourism

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the merger between the British Tourism Authority and the English Tourist Council. [147249]

Mr. Caborn: On 31 October 2002, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a radical reform of tourism support in Britain aimed at building stronger, more effective and more coherent arrangements through the creation of a single lead body focusing on marketing. Functions of the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourism Council were merged on 1 April 2003 to form VisitBritain, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appointed Sir Michael Lickiss as Chairman.

VisitBritain restructured its overseas operations during 2003. In addition to promoting Britain overseas as a tourist destination, VisitBritain is taking forward its new role as lead body for the domestic marketing of England. The England Marketing Advisory Board (EMAB), chaired by Hugh Taylor, was established on 1 April 2003 to advise the Board of VisitBritain on domestic marketing, and its domestic marketing strategy was published in November 2003. With EMAB's support, VisitBritain has launched a series of domestic 'Enjoy England' campaigns.

The merger enables VisitBritain to use in the domestic market its expertise in marketing Britain internationally, developing more effective partnerships with private investors to support tourism across Britain and building on the success of the Million Visitor Campaign. It brings economies in terms of overheads and central services and it creates opportunities for private industry and the regions to take a stronger leadership role in setting the marketing agenda.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how the tourism satellite accounts will be of assistance to the tourism industry. [147254]

Mr. Caborn: Tourism satellite accounts will deliver both improved and more extensive information on the economic value of the tourism sector. Tourism satellite accounts will facilitate the production of much improved estimates of quantities such as value added and employment in the tourism industry, and its linkages with the wider economy.

The tourism industry will benefit directly from this enhanced source of information to assist their business planning and decision-making, and indirectly from decisions taken by public bodies that are informed by this new substantial information source.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport which bodies will be consulted on the implementation of the tourism satellite accounts. [147255]

Mr. Caborn: The management group of the UK Tourism Satellite Account First Steps Project are currently considering a draft consultation plan.

This proposes a list of consultees which includes the Office for National Statistics as well as the following groups of organisations: devolved administrations, international organisations, regional development agencies, tourist boards, and the tourism industry through trade associations.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what the estimated cost of implementing the tourism satellite accounts is; [147256]

(2) when she expects the tourism satellite accounts to be completed; and if she will make a statement. [147257]

Mr. Caborn: The cost of the UK Tourism Satellite Account First Steps project, which has just begun, will be £75,000.

As well as providing provisional figures for the main parts of a tourism satellite account, the project will deliver a report describing further work and data collection that would be required to subsequently develop a full tourism satellite account. This will also give an estimate of the costs that this would incur and the expected time-scale. This phase of the work will be completed by early autumn 2004.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Prisons

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Minister for Women what efforts are being made to prevent suicides among the female prison population. [147104]

Ms Hewitt: Reducing the number of self-inflicted deaths and instances of self-harm in prison establishments is a ministerial and Prison Service priority. A proactive three-year programme to develop policies and practices to reduce prisoner suicide and manage self-harm in prisons commenced in April 2001. The main principles of the strategy apply across all types of prisons and prisoners whether male or female. An investment of over £21 million through the three-year programme is allowing physical improvements (now 75 per cent. complete) to be made at six 'Safer Local' pilot sites, one of which is the women's prison and YOI Eastwood Park.

The learning resulting from this programme will benefit all prisoners; meanwhile, women prisoners are to benefit from a specifically targeted and separate suicide prevention and self-harm management strategy being developed for them. This builds upon a number of interventions including: internal improvements in handling population pressures; individual crisis counselling for women prisoners who self-harm; the continued development and evaluation of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, which is currently being trialled at Durham, Bullwood Hall and Holloway prisons; investment and planning to ensure progress on the detoxification strategy in the Women's Estate; the development (in collaboration with the University of Newcastle) of a new, three-stage screening process to more effectively detect mental health problems; and the introduction of a new training pack for all staff working with women in custody, which includes a module on the health and well being of women prisoners. £1 million from the Department of Health has been allocated to the Women's Estate to be spent on the recruitment of psychiatric nurses, and 11 out of the 17 prisons for women now have mental health in-reach facilities.

Brockhill, Eastwood Park, Holloway, New Hall and Styal prisons were among the first establishments to have full-time, dedicated Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs); and now all women's prisons have a designated full or part-time SPC. All women's establishments also deliver suicide awareness training to staff and it is an inherent part of all employees' jobs to observe and report behaviour that may indicate a tendency to self-harm.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Brighton and Hove Albion

Norman Baker: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column 342W, on Brighton and Hove Albion, if he will list the hon. Members with whom *(a)* he and *(b)* other ministers have discussed this issue. [143943]

Yvette Cooper: Neither the Deputy Prime Minister, nor any other Minister in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, has discussed the proposals for a football stadium at Palmer, East Sussex with other hon. Members.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146912]

Yvette Cooper: The number of permanent and casual staff employed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in *(a)* West Midlands is 140 and *(b)* Staffordshire as a whole is 41

Joan Walley: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement; [146927]

(2) what assessment his Department have made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to north Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146896]

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146883]

(4) what assessment his Department have made of the benefits of re-location of staff to north Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement. [146867]

Yvette Cooper: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 12 January 2004.

Education Funding

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Cabinet Office's strategy and delivery units on changes in the way money is allocated to schools and the impact this would have on the system of local government financial support. [147149]

Mr. Raynsford: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Alexander) on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 554W.

Fire Service (Radio System)

Mr. Caton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how the Government will ensure that usable spectrum is available to bidders competing to provide a service wide radio replacement scheme for the fire service. [147807]

Mr. Raynsford: In their response to the Invitation to Submit Proposals documentation suppliers have indicated that spectrum is available which is sufficient to meet the needs of their proposed solutions.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the national competition for a service-wide radio replacement scheme for the fire service. [147808]

Mr. Raynsford: The competition for a national radio system for the Fire and Rescue Services is progressing to plan, with competition scheduled for December 2007.

Housing

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what arrangements the Government have put in place to ensure that the special needs of disabled people are provided for within its affordable housing policy. [144096]

Yvette Cooper: All new build affordable housing schemes funded by the Government through the Housing Corporation must meet the requirements of 'Part M' of the building regulations, which the Government revised in 1999 to improve the accessibility and convenience of new housing. The revised regulations include requirements to ensure that entrances, lifts, corridors, doorways and WCs are accessible, including to wheelchair users. In addition, all newly built affordable housing schemes funded through the Housing Corporation must comply with the Corporation's scheme development standards, which adopt criteria for accessibility and internal environments that help to make homes even more adaptable to long-term needs.

The Government also provides resources for adaptations to existing homes to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities. Local housing authorities have a statutory duty to offer means tested Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to eligible applicants in both the private and social rented sectors who require adaptations to help them live independently in their own homes. The Government meets 60 per cent. of local authority expenditure incurred on DFGs, with the remaining 40 per cent. being met from the authority's own resources. We have increased funding for this grant to £99 million in 2003–04, compared with £88 million in 2002–03 and £56 million in 1997–98.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what complaints he has received on the balloting arrangements of local authorities consulting tenants on plans to transfer their housing stocks. [146630]

Keith Hill: None.

Housing Bill

Jon Trickett: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the impact of measures in the Housing Bill on promoting safety of the student population. [147457]

Keith Hill: No formal assessment has been made as to how the proposals in the Housing Bill will impact on the safety of students. However, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister believes proposals will bring real benefits to students.

The Bill includes measures to license Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), including shared student houses. Local authorities are required to licence HMOs of three or more storeys which are occupied by five or more persons. In addition they will have discretionary powers to license other categories HMOs where there are problems for which licensing is appropriate. The exercise of those powers will be subject to effective local consultation and to approval by the appropriate minister.

Jon Trickett: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the number of houses in multiple occupation which are likely to be licensed under measures in the Housing Bill. [147459]

Keith Hill: The Government are proposing to introduce mandatory licensing for highest risk Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister expects this to cover properties

of three storeys or more and five people or more. It is estimated that about 120,000 houses in multiple occupation are expected to be licensed under this proposal. This estimate, however, does not include properties that could be required to be licensed where a local authority seeks to use in its area the discretionary power that the Bill provides to extend the scope of HMO licensing to HMOs not subject to the national mandatory licensing.

Local Government Finance

Keith Vaz: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what representations he has received from Leicester city council concerning the proposed local government settlement for Leicester in 2004–05. [148206]

Mr. Raynsford: Since the start of consultation on 19 November, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has received two representations from Leicester city council, on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2004–05. Consultation closed on 9 January. I have recently written to the Leader of Leicester city council to express concern about media reports of potentially large council tax increase in Leicester.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much additional money Leicester city council has received from his Department in each year since 1997. [148207]

Mr. Raynsford: Grant issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and its predecessor departments for Leicester city council since 1997 is as tabled:

	£ million
1997–98	215.6
1998–99	223.4
1999–00	227.8
2000–01	236.5
2001–02	242.1
2002–03	252.0
2003–04[1]	273.3

[1] Budgeted figures. Includes Revenue Support Grant, Redistributed Non-Domestic Rates, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (from 2001–02 onwards).

Source:
RS forms 1997–98 to 2002–03, RG forms 2001–02 to 2002–03, RA 2003–04 form and RA(SG) 2003–04 form.

Parish Clerks

Mr. Key: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what percentage of parish clerks are paid less than the minimum wage; and if he will make a statement. [147430]

Mr. Raynsford: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the proportion of rough sleepers who had previously been in local authority care in each of the last five years. [147337]

Yvette Cooper: This information is not held centrally, and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Scalding Accidents

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many people *(a)* over and *(b)* under 12 have been seriously scalded in baths or showers in each of the last five years. [147206]

Phil Hope: The total number of injuries due to scalding in baths or showers over the five most recent years for which records are held is in the table.

Year	*Under 12*	*Over 12*
1998	2,700	918
1999	2,560	823
2000	1,863	976
2001	2,000	1,107
2002	1,743	1,148

Data on the severity of these injuries is not held centrally, and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many children under 12 who were seriously scalded in showers or baths in each of the past five years were unaccompanied by an adult. [147207]

Phil Hope: Accident records collected in hospital casualty departments do not record whether children were accompanied or supervised by an adult when bathing.

Social Housing (Plymouth)

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many social houses for rent have been built by *(a)* housing associations and *(b)* Plymouth city council in Plymouth in each of the last three financial years. [147164]

Keith Hill: The figures reported by Plymouth city council and the National House Building Council in returns to the Office of the Prime Minister show:

	(a)	*(b)*
2000–01	38	0
2001–02	24	0
2002–03	4	0

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department has given to Malawi in 2003–04 to deal with food shortages; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of its use. [147347]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: DFID has committed £13 million to assist Malawi with food security in financial year 2003–04. This aid will pay for improved seeds and fertilizers for over 2 million poor households, pay-for-work schemes for rural poor, feeding programmes for the most vulnerable groups and strengthening management in Malawi's safety net

programmes and food crisis early warning systems. DFID also works closely in this area with the World Bank and the European Commission which plans to spend £14 million on food security this year.

Thorough evaluations of the largest schemes are made on a regular basis. DFID's seed and fertilizer scheme shows very high returns. The pay-for-work scheme needs some changes to improve targeting and sustainability. The food crisis early warning system is steadily improving and should meet the information needs identified in the 2001–02 food crisis.

World Trade Round

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development on how many occasions he had discussions with Mr. Pascal Lamy between 10 and 14 September 2003. [146595]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I have been asked to reply.

The UK delegation was in close contact with the European Commission, at all levels, throughout the duration of the WTO ministerial in Cancun.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether he was consulted about the drafting of the Derbez text at the World Trade Organisation ministerial in Cancun. [146603]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministerial Declaration, circulated by the Mexican Foreign Minister, Derbez, was produced following extensive consultations with WTO Members and the European Commission. The UK and other EU member states made their views known to the Commission formally, through meetings of the Article 133 Committee and the European Council, and informally.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what his latest assessment is of the number of people facing food shortages in Zimbabwe. [147341]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee's survey in April last year estimated that approximately 4.4 million people in rural areas and 1.1 million people in urban areas would require food aid during the pre-harvest months of January, February and March 2004. However, it is now clear that this figure is an underestimate and is being revised upwards to 5.1 million people in rural areas. Results of a comprehensive urban vulnerability assessment are yet to be released, but are also expected to show a significant increase in people requiring humanitarian assistance.

This increase in beneficiary numbers is partly due to spiralling inflation (now over 600 per cent.), which has affected food prices in shops. There is also emerging evidence of up to several hundred thousand people facing crisis in the former commercial farming areas, most of whom are former farm workers displaced by the Government's disastrous land reform programme. Additionally, the state-controlled Grain Marketing Board has proved erratic and unreliable in contributing to food supply and distribution in the country. Donors are monitoring the situation closely, in close consultation with the World Food Programme.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with the Government of South Africa on food imports to Zimbabwe. [147342]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: Apart from being a major exporter of food to Zimbabwe, South Africa is also a donor in the on-going humanitarian relief effort. The South African Government donated approximately 58,000 metric tonnes of maize to the previous WFP emergency operation for 2002–03, and may make a further contribution to the current operation. Accordingly, representatives of the South African Government participate regularly in co-ordination meetings concerning the humanitarian programme in Zimbabwe, where issues such as food imports are discussed.

Outside Zimbabwe, representatives from UK Government regularly discuss the Zimbabwe crisis with the Government of South Africa, though discussions usually focus on broad political and humanitarian issues, rather than food imports.

The UK Government, together with the other major donors (EU and USAID), continue to promote the liberalisation of food imports to Zimbabwe and the role of the private sector.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Arms Exports (Israel)

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether approvals have been given for the export to Israel of categories of equipment covering *(a)* mortars, *(b)* rocket launchers, *(c)* anti-tank weapons, *(d)* military explosives, *(e)* infrared and radar sensors and *(f)* chemical and biological agents. [146989]

Nigel Griffiths: Since May 1997, the Government have published an Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls containing details of all goods authorised for export from the UK and to which destinations. Copies of the Annual Report are available from the Libraries of the House.

British Energy

Anne Picking: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to her written statement of 5 January, *Official Report*, column 1WS, on British Energy, what the current outstanding drawdown on the Government's credit facility by British Energy is. [147777]

Mr. Timms: Nil. As the company stated on 23 December 2003 the proceeds from the sale of Amergen were used to pay down all outstanding drawings on the credit facility.

Business Support Schemes

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been spent on business support schemes in the UK in each year since 1997, broken down by region. [146145]

Ms Hewitt: Regional analysis of the Department's net spend on Promotion of Enterprise, Innovation and Increased Productivity (including Regional Development Agency expenditure) for the years 1998–99 to 2001 -02 is as follows:

£ million

Region	*Financial year* 1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02
North East	23.6	32.0	45.8	71.0
North West	67.3	71.5	93.8	120.4
Yorkshire and Humberside	49.9	52.8	57.7	72.7
East Midlands	43.4	37.7	49.1	56.5
West Midlands	53.7	62.4	82.2	79.0
South West	49.8	44.4	49.5	66.5
Eastern	68.4	54.9	61.8	73.5
London	103.1	86.0	106.0	116.5
South East	102.4	84.9	103.5	110.0
Total	561.6	526.6	649.4	766.1

Similar data are not readily available for 1997–98 and the full analysis has not yet been completed for 2002–03.

Cancun Summit

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it was her policy to support the decision of the European Union at the World Trade Organisation ministerial in Cancun to pursue negotiations on the Singapore issues. [146601]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government remain convinced that it is important for developed and developing countries alike to reduce bureaucracy on cross border trade (trade facilitation), to encourage a climate which facilitates foreign direct investment, to promote economic growth through fair competition and to encourage transparency in the procurement of public goods and services to help reduce corruption and increase good governance.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she was consulted about the drafting of the Derbez text at the World Trade Organisation ministerial in Cancun. [146602]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The draft Ministerial Declaration, circulated by the Mexican Foreign Minister Derbez, was produced following extensive consultations with WTO members and the European Commission. The UK and other EU member states made their views known to the commission formally, through meetings of the Article 133 Committee and the European Council, and informally.

Miners Compensation

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the total amount of full and final settlements and interim payments paid to former miners and their families to date is in South Yorkshire. [147405]

Nigel Griffiths: To date £127 million has been paid in respect of respiratory disease and £163 million in respect vibration white finger to claimants in South Yorkshire.

Credit Registers

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were placed on a bad creditor register as a result of incorrect information in each of the last 10 years; and what right of appeal those wrongly placed on such registers have. [147699]

Mr. Sutcliffe: There is no register of bad creditors as such. Credit reference agencies hold details of credit accounts and payment histories. In some cases these may show late payments or defaults. Lenders use this information to make decisions regarding the suitability of lending to a particular consumer. These decisions may vary depending on individual lenders commercial decisions.

If individuals believe a particular lender has registered incorrect information about their account with a credit reference agency, they can contact either the lender or the agency to seek correction. Checks should then be made on the accuracy of the information, and corrections made where appropriate. Where individuals can show that the information on their credit file is inaccurate and the lender has refused to amend it, the matter can be referred to the Information Commissioner. Alternatively, individuals have the right to seek redress through the courts.

There are no centrally collated results to show the number of applications for corrections on credit reference files, nor the number of corrections made as a result of those applications.

Departmental Advertising

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising was for her Department in 1997–98. [145329]

Ms Hewitt: My Department's expenditure on advertising through the Central Office of Information in 1997–98 amounted to £2,504,885 excluding VAT and subsequent COI rebates. Records of expenditure on other information campaigns are not held centrally.

Departmental Grants

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funding her Department has provided to the Industry Forum Adaptation scheme since its inception; and what time scale applies to this funding. [145487]

Ms Hewitt: My Department undertook to support an initial two-year Industry Forum Adaptation (IFA) programme comprising a number of separate sectorally-focused projects. An initial tranche of £15 million funding was agreed in July 1999. This allocation was fully committed by March 2002. Following a high degree of demand from sectors, I announced a further

£20 million (£11 million devoted to IFA) at the Manufacturing Summit in December 2001. Funding support the majority of IF A projects is over three to five years on a tapering basis. Contractual spending commitments under IFA extend to financial year 2007–08.

Dumping

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is her policy to seek an end to dumping of agricultural produce by developed countries on developing countries as part of a development treaty agreement with the World Trade Organisation. [146640]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The ultimate goal in WTO agriculture negotiations is to create freer and fairer world markets in agriculture. The Doha mandate commits all WTO members to substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support and reductions, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidy. If agreed, this will make a significant contribution to reducing dumping of subsidised produce on developing country markets.

Electricity Grid

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action her Department is taking to ensure that the national electricity grid is able to cope in the winter months. [148268]

Mr. Timms: We expect the national electricity grid to be robust over the winter months. However, there are always some exceptional circumstances capable of leading to supply problems. We are not complacent and will continue to monitor the situation with National Grid and Ofgem.

Employment Directive

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the volunteering sector will be covered by the Employment Directive. [146425]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The European Employment Directive applies to employment and vocational training. While it does not cover unpaid volunteers, therefore, people employed in the voluntary sector enjoy the same rights under it as those employed in the private and public sectors.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it will be possible to claim discrimination on more than one ground under the Employment Directive. [146426]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Yes. The grounds covered by this Directive are not mutually exclusive. As with other employment discrimination legislation, parties covered by the Employment Directive will be able to claim discrimination on any of the grounds on which they believe they have been discriminated.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how her Department will define the legitimate aims an employer may use to justify age discrimination. [146428]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The consultation on proposals for age discrimination legislation ended on 20 October 2003. It sought views on the legitimate aims that employers might use to justify age discrimination. We will decide what kind of approach to take in the light of our analysis of the responses to the consultation. We will consult on the draft regulations this Spring.

Employment Tribunals

Mr. Edward Davey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how long it took on average in each year since 1999 for employment tribunals to issue a decision after a hearing has finished. [147004]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* In the last four financial years, based on the information currently held in the Employment Tribunal Service's statistical database, the average length of time taken to issue a decision was as follows:

	Days
1999–2000	20
2000–01	22
2001–02	22
2002–03	20

Source:
Employment Tribunals Service.

Energy Policy

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what meteorological studies her Department has *(a)* conducted and *(b)* commissioned on average percentage levels of availability at different points during the year of (i) onshore wind farms, (ii) offshore wind farms and (iii) wave power installations. [R] [147516]

Mr. Timms: Last year my Department commissioned a study in order to assist in determining the priority areas for future commercial exploitation of renewable energy.

The study 'Atlas of UK Marine Renewables' will among other things provide a spatial quantification of offshore wind and wave resources and will also consider the temporal variation of the energy parameters. The first results from the study are expected shortly.

Other supported projects which have included meteorological studies include; 'Predicting Offshore Wind Energy Resources (POWER),[1] project which developed a novel wind resource assessment methodology which can produce long-term and spatially detailed estimates of the wind conditions at offshore sites and the 'Forecasting Short-Term Wind Farm Production'[2] project which developed a method that applies a model to provide site specific forecasts of wind speed and power from one to 36 hour horizons.

Additionally, the Department of Trade and Industry's Wind Speed Database contains estimates of the annual mean wind speed throughout the UK. The database uses the Ordnance Survey grid system each

value stored in the database is the estimated average for a 1km square at 10m, 25m or 45m above ground level.

Full reports of both mentioned projects together with the Wind Speed Database can be seen on the DTI website at www.dti.gov.uk

[1] Predicting Offshore Wind Energy Resources (POWER)—ETSU W/35/00536/00/REP URN 02/1436

[2] Forecasting Short-Term Wind Farm Production—FES W/45/00572/00/00 URN 03/892

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps her Department has taken in the last six months to ensure that the nuclear energy option remains open. [R] [147519]

Mr. Timms: Skills and Research and Development are key areas for maintaining nuclear power as an option for the future.

The Government have been assisting in the establishment of a Sector Skills Council to represent the needs of the nuclear industry. Cogent Sector Skills Council is undergoing the development process for licensing early this year. It will aim to ensure that the education and training base meet the nuclear employers current and future needs.

New opportunities for fission research, with funding up to £5 million over four years, were recently announced as part of the Research Council's "Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy" (TSEC) initiative. This funding comes from the £28 million allocated to the Research Councils for sustainable energy research under the 2002 Spending review.

We have also been looking closely at energy research needs across the board in the light of the Energy White Paper, including nuclear fission. DTI funding is being considered as part of the 2004 Spending Review, which covers the period 2005–08.

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment her Department has made of the report, "An Essential Programme to Underpin Government Policy on Nuclear Power", published by the Nuclear Task Force in July 2003. [R] [147520]

Mr. Timms: The report's recommendations are being considered in the wider context of UK energy research requirements as part of the 2004 Spending Review, covering Government expenditure for the period 2005–08.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the Renewable Energy Capital Modernisation Fund was allocated in 2003–04, as referred to in her Departmental Report 2003; and what amounts were allocated through non-nuclear expenditure directly related to the creation of open markets in each year since 1997. [147797]

Mr. Timms: The Renewable Energy Capital Modernisation Fund is providing £60 million of the additional £100 million for renewable energy announced by the Prime Minister in March 2001. The allocation of this £100 million to different activities in the renewable energy sector was announced in November 2001 and is set out as follows.

	£ million
Capital grants for offshore wind	25
Biomass capital grants:	30
Energy crops infrastructure (DEFRA)	3.5
Innovative photovoltaic (PV) projects	10
Community and household schemes	10
Planning facilitation	2.5
Metering, storage and control technologies	4
Wave and tidal demonstrations	5
Support for "blue skies" research (OST)	10

Inclusive of the Prime Minister's £100 million, the Government are allocating £348 million over four years in direct support for renewable energy. This is over and above the incentive to renewable energy provided by the Renewables Obligation. All this support will contribute to opening up market opportunities for renewable energy.

Engineering Construction Industry

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make it her policy to ensure that the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry is made mandatory. [145490]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Government believe that voluntary collective agreements should not be legally enforceable unless all the parties covered by such agreements want it. To do otherwise would undermine the voluntarist nature of collective bargaining in this country and dissuade parties from entering voluntary agreements.

Industrial Disease

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the ratio is of live to posthumous claims for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; and how many new claims were received in each of the last 10 weeks, broken down by area. [147266]

Nigel Griffiths: The ratio of claims is 47 per cent. live and 53 per cent. deceased.

The number of claims received is:

W/E	*Scotland*	*England*	*Wales*	*Total*
2003				
2 November	638	6,762	625	8,025
9 November	419	7,039	302	7,760
16 November	471	6,021	977	7,469
23 November	535	7,189	1,322	9,046
30 November	373	5,833	1,506	7,712
7 December	694	6,395	1,715	8,804
14 December	602	5,136	3,509	9,247
21 December	542	5,122	1,495	7,159
28 December	71	1,097	68	1,236
2004				
4 January	60	1,890	64	2,014

Investment Rules

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is on the development of non-discriminatory multilateral rules for investment. [146588]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government remain convinced that there are potential economic and social benefits to be gained from a multilateral rules on investment for both developed and developing countries. However, we must take account of the views of developing countries, many of whom have expressed their strong opposition to taking forward negotiations particularly in the areas of investment and competition.

I, therefore, welcome the fact that EU Trade Ministers agreed on 2 December that the European Community should "unbundle" the four issues and explore alternative, more flexible approaches, including the possibility of removing some, or all, of the Singapore issues from the Doha Round.

Iraq (Contracts)

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent assessment she has made of the opportunities for *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* Iraqi companies to win contracts and sub-contracts from the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq; and if she will make a statement. [147528]

Ms Hewitt: We wish to see UK companies play a substantial role in the reconstruction process in Iraq. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) maintains an open system for the tendering process and several UK companies have already won contracts to assist in the reconstruction in Iraq. A further request for proposals has recently been released by the CPA Project Management Office which provides additional opportunities for UK companies to bid for contracts and sub-contracts.

Iraqi companies are eligible to bid for both the prime contracts and sub-contracts.

Leak Inquiries

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list occasions on which her Department have conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if she will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from her Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147193]

Ms Hewitt: The information is as follows:

1997

The DTI conducted nine leak inquiries and assisted other Government Departments in a further four inquiries.

1998

The DTI conducted four leak inquiries and assisted other Government Departments in a further three inquiries.

1999

The DTI conducted one leak inquiry and assisted other Government Departments in a further four inquiries.

2000

The DTI conducted one leak inquiry and assisted other Government Departments in a further three inquiries.

2001

The DTI conducted no leak inquiries and was not asked to assist in any leak inquiry conducted by another Government Department.

2002

The DTI conducted one leak inquiry and assisted another Government Department in one further inquiry.

2003

The DTI conducted one leak inquiry and assisted other Government Departments in a further two inquiries.

On no occasion has the name of any person accused of leaking information been made public.

World Trade Round

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on how many occasions she had discussions with Pascal Lamy between 10 and 14 September 2003. [146594]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: My right hon. Friend, and I, had various discussions with Pascal Lamy between 10 and 14 September 2003. The UK delegation was in close contact with the European Commission, at all levels, throughout the duration of the WTO ministerial in Cancun.

Nuclear Energy

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the basis is for the value of British Energy's spent fuel stockpile under paragraph 10.2, page 27 of the Historic Liabilities Funding Agreement between the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, British Energy Generation (UK) Limited, British Energy Generation Ltd, Newco1 and Newco2, dated 1 October 2003. [147622]

Mr. Timms: British Energy's spent fuel represents a significant liability, provisions for which are set out in the Company's published accounts. Under the terms agreed for the restructuring of British Energy, the Government will take financial responsibility for the company's historic spent fuel liabilities, but British Energy will retain title to the fuel. In order to give the Government maximum flexibility in dealing with this fuel, for which it will be financially responsible, the Historic Liabilities Funding Agreement contains the option for the Government or another body nominated by the Government to take title to the fuel from British Energy for the nominal sum of £1.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the implications for security of nuclear materials at Sellafield of the report released on 18 December 2003 of nuclear material unaccounted for at UKAEA, BNFL and URENCO nuclear sites. [147624]

Mr. Timms: There are no security implications associated with the published "materials unaccounted for" (MUF) figures. The MUF values for any accountancy period need to be read in the context of the processing of materials that occurred over that period, and the published figures relating to Sellafield are within acceptable limits. There is no evidence to suggest that there have been any real losses or gains of nuclear material.

Patents

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to her answer to question

reference 145352 of 7 January, if she will list the 13 animals to which patents have been granted; and in each case, to which part of the animal the patent applies. [147738]

Ms Hewitt: The animals are nematode worms (four patents), salmon (one patent), trout, (one patent), Zebrafish (one patent), mice (one patent), and non-human mammals in general (five patents). In each case, the patent relates to the whole organism.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* new jobs were created and *(b)* jobs were safeguarded following allocation of Regional Selective Assistance applications in each of the last five years, broken down by region. [147163]

Jacqui Smith: This information can be found in the Industrial Development Act Annual Report published by the Stationery Office and placed in the Library of the House.

Singapore Issues

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the stance of her Department was on the Singapore issues at meetings of European trade ministers and officials before 15 December 2003. [146634]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government remain convinced that there are potential economic and social benefits to be gained from the Singapore issues for both developed and developing countries. However, we must take account of the views of developing countries, many of whom have expressed their strong opposition to taking forward negotiations, particularly in the areas of investment and competition.

I, therefore, welcome the fact that EU Trade Ministers agreed on 2 December that the European Community should "unbundle" the four issues and explore alternative, more flexible approaches, including the possibility of removing some, or all, of the Singapore issues from the Doha Round.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is on the Singapore issue of trade facilitation. [146591]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government fully support the EU objective of securing an, ideally multilateral, agreement within the WTO on trade facilitation. Research by the World Bank and the OECD, together with the European Commission's own analysis, show the potential for savings and welfare gains. Proportionately developing countries, in particular, stand to gain most.

Single Market

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on *(a)* European Community draft legislation to create a single market in service; and *(b)* on the effect the proposals will have. [140533]

Jacqui Smith: The proposals, which were expected to be published in the form of a European Framework Directive in mid-December, are the commission's response to a request by leaders at the Lisbon European Council in 2000 that the internal market be made to work for services.

The aim is to remove those barriers to cross-border trade that affect all service sectors and all stages of the business process—establishment, use of inputs, promotion, distribution, sales, after-sales. Since the proposals have not yet been formally published, the Government cannot make any detailed comments at this point on their effect.

The UK has already expressed support for the aim of making the single market a reality for services believing that this will bring advantages to the UK economy, its businesses and consumers. Market services have been increasing in importance to the UK economy over many years and now account for the bulk of UK economic growth.

Greater competition and openness have the potential of providing to recipients more choice of better quality services at cheaper prices and reducing the cost of manufactured goods, thereby creating further gains for consumers. The implications for UK businesses would extend from traditional service companies, such as retailers and accountants, to manufacturers, who use and provide services.

Small Businesses

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms in Leeds, West have benefited from the small firms loan guarantee; and in which sectors. [147218]

Nigel Griffiths: In the financial year 2002–03, 10 firms in Leeds, West benefited from a loan under the Small Firms Loan Guarantee; eight in the service sector and two in manufacturing.

In the current financial year to 31 December 2003, 14 firms have received loans; seven in the service sector and seven in manufacturing.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small businesses have *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed in disadvantaged areas in each year since 1997. [147607]

Nigel Griffiths: Value added tax (VAT) registrations and de-registrations are the best official guide to the pattern of start-ups and closures. These cover businesses of all sizes.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has defined 88 local authorities in England as being deprived for the purposes of targeting the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

The number of businesses registering and de-registering for VAT in each calendar year from 1997 to 2002 in deprived areas in England is as follows:

VAT registrations and de-registrations in English deprived areas[1]

	VAT registrations	*VAT de-registrations*
1997	58,835	48,045
1998	60,490	48,890
1999	59,450	50,490
2000	60,045	52,470
2001	56,530	52,830
2002	56,255	55,530

[1] Deprived areas are defined by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. See http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk for further details

Tariffs

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what quantitive assessment she has made of the effect of *(a)* tariff rates and *(b)* tariff escalation on the economies and living standards of developing countries. [146641]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The best source of information on this topic are the large number of studies which have already been undertaken by international organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD and the OECD, and by charitable organisations such as Oxfam. The work of these organisations demonstrates the need to look at all barriers to trade and the need for fundamental trade policy reform.

It remains, however, very difficult to make an accurate quantitative economic assessment of the overall impact of tariffs and tariff escalation on developing country markets. The World Bank have, however, estimated that the comprehensive reform of all aspects of agricultural policies in developed countries could boost the income of developing countries by as much as $100 billion.

Trade Support

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effect of an agreement at the World Trade Organisation with the G20 on subsidies, tariffs and the Singapore issue on *(a)* the G20, *(b)* the United Kingdom, *(c)* the European Union and *(d)* the United States. [146474]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The potential effect of agreements on any WTO member would depend on the specific provisions and the level of commitments undertaken by that country.

An ambitious conclusion to the current round of WTO negotiations, aimed at reducing trade distorting subsidies, tariffs and non tariff barriers to international trade and investment, would improve the prospects of increased prosperity for all WTO members.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had since 17 September 2003 with her counterpart in the United States about *(a)* the desirability of and *(b)* the timetable for eliminating US subsidies to cotton producers. [146586]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: There is ongoing contact between UK and US officials about all aspects of the WTO Round, including on the question of support for cotton production. In view of the importance of this issue, the UK has provided €50,000 in technical assistance to help the four West African producer countries, all of which are LDCs, promote their case in the WTO. All WTO members are committed to substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support and we must work together to achieve that objective including on cotton subsidies.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether developing countries have produced a list of proposed products to be covered by the proposal in the Derbez text to remove export subsidies for products of particular interest to developing countries. [146721]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: No, there is not a list as far as we are aware.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what comes into the category of green box support. [146605]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: For domestic support measures to qualify as 'green box' under WTO rules, they must have no, or at most minimal, trade-distorting effects on production. A full list of the support categories that can qualify as 'green box' is set out in Annex 2 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture 1994.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what comes into the category of amber box support. [146606]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Under WTO rules, amber box support covers all trade-distorting domestic support measures paid to agricultural producers. This means all support to producers other than that:

(i) which is exempted as 'blue box' or 'green box' compatible (for a definition of payments falling under the blue box and green box see answers to PQs 146607 and 146605); or

(ii) which is an integral part of a development programme in developing countries, for instance to assist low-income or resource poor producers; or

(iii) which encourages producers in developing countries to diversify away from illicitly growing narcotic crops.

Members do not have to declare payments to producers below a "de minimis" threshold of 5 per cent. of their total value of agricultural production.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on what constitutes blue box domestic support. [146607]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: WTO rules classify 'blue box' support separately to 'amber box' support as it is less trade-distorting in impact. This is because blue box must take the form of a direct payment under a production-limiting programme and be:

(i) based on fixed areas and yields; or

(ii) made on 85 per cent. or less of the base level of production; or

(iii) (where applied to livestock) made on a fixed number of head.

Working Time Directive

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact of the Working Time Directive's opt-out clause on industrial relations in the UK. [143828]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The opt-out from the weekly working time limits provides workers with the choice to work longer hours if they want to and flexibility for employers. A recent study, "The Business Context to Long Hours Working" published by my department shows that employers thought the most common barrier to reducing the hours of staff was the needs of the business and workload (55 per cent. of respondents cited this), second to this was the concern that existing staff may resist the reduction in hours as it could limit their choice to work these hours and a reduction in their overtime pay (22 per cent.)

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had since 14 September 2003 with the Director General of the World Trade Organisation about the status of papers produced by chairmen and facilitators of working groups, and the role of the World Trade Organisation Secretariat, at World Trade Organisation Ministerials. [146596]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: My right hon. Friend has discussed various issues with Dr. Supachai, since 14 September, including the organisation of WTO Ministerial conferences.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what immediate reforms she has proposed to the conduct of World Trade Organisation Ministerials. [146615]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government have discussed a number of proposals for the reform of the WTO with our EU partners and the European Commission. These proposals are reflected in the commission's strategy paper, "Reviving the DDA Negotiations—the EU perspective", which was endorsed by the European Council of Ministers on 8 December last year.

However, it is vital that reform of the WTO should not distract members from pursuing the Doha Development Agenda.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what submission her Department has made to the Sutherland Commission on longer-term reforms of World Trade Organisation Ministerials. [146635]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government have discussed a number of proposals for the reform of the WTO with our EU partners and the European Commission. These proposals are reflected in the Commission's strategy paper, "Reviving the DDA Negotiations—the EU perspective", which was endorsed by the European Council of Ministers on 8 December last year.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Infant Death

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Solicitor General (1) if she will make a statement on the implications of the Angela Cannings case for the Crown Prosecution Service; [144510]

(2) what guidance she has issued to Chief Crown prosecutors about cases involving mothers accused of killing their infant children; and whether she expects to issue new guidance; [144511]

(3) how many mothers were charged with infanticide in each of the last 20 years; and how many mothers were charged with murder of their own children in each of the last 20 years; [144512]

(4) if the Crown Prosecution Service will review family court cases in which evidence was given by Professor Meadow; [144516]

(5) when the inter-departmental group she established to consider the implications of the Sally Clarke case will decide whether to review cases involving Professor Meadow; [144517]

(6) in how many family court cases evidence was given by Professor Meadow; [144518]

(7) when she expects the Crown Prosecution Service to conclude its review of the cases in which Dr. Alan Williams conducted a post mortem; [144519]

(8) what the total cost to public funds of the prosecution of Sally Clarke, Angela Cannings and Trupti Patel has been. [144524]

The Solicitor-General: We are awaiting the full written judgment of the Court of Appeal in the Angela Cannings case and therefore it is not possible to make a detailed statement on the implications at this stage.

At the Court of Appeal hearing, Lord Justice Judge expressed concern about the difficulties for the trial jury in resolving issues regarding complex scientific evidence in relation to infant death when the present state of scientific knowledge is evolving.

He went on to state that the appeal had raised a number of issues of general public interest in relation to infant deaths and the Court of Appeal would therefore need time to reflect on the terms of its judgment.

The Crown Prosecution Service has taken note of these comments and will study the full judgment carefully when it is released.

Since the written reasons of the Court of Appeal in the case of Sally Clark were made available, and following the acquittal of Trupti Patel, the Crown Prosecution Service has undertaken a number of actions. Interim guidance was sent to all Chief Crown Prosecutors on 17 June 2003 requesting that all cases be identified in which either Doctor Williams or Professor Meadow are witnesses and requiring them to serve a copy of the judgement in the Sally Clark case on the defence and to draw attention to sections of the judgement touching on their evidence.

Following the appeal of Sally Clark, the Attorney General established a Group comprising representatives of the police, Crown Prosecution Service, Home Office and other relevant agencies to consider whether any cases in which Doctor Williams has given important evidence require a more in depth review.

On 28 July, the Group held its first meeting. Progress was made in two areas. Firstly, on how previous cases in which Doctor Alan Williams conducted a post mortem

were to be identified and, secondly, what factors would be used to select the cases on which the Group should concentrate.

Following that meeting, work commenced immediately on the identification of relevant cases. The Group met a deadline of mid-September for the conclusion of that process. By that date, approximately 50 previous cases had been identified, which dated back between five-seven years. These cases all involved charges of murder, manslaughter or infanticide where Doctor Williams had been instructed by the police to conduct the post mortem and which had resulted in a conviction. The cases themselves are now being individually reviewed. An experienced Metropolitan police officer and a Crown Prosecutor are conducting the review. This work is continuing.

When the full written judgement in Angela Cannings is published, the same group will consider whether to extend the review to include cases involving Professor Meadow.

The total cost incurred by the Crown Prosecution Service in the case of Sally Clark will eventually be approximately £320,000. That figure comprises counsels' fees, expert witness costs and approximately £50,000 is estimated as being attributable to Crown Prosecution Service staff costs.

The costs of the Trupti Patel case are approximately £183,716.63. We cannot provide an estimate of CPS costs for this case at this stage, however, I will write to the hon. Member with those details once known.

The costs of the Angela Cannings case have not yet been settled. However, it is estimated that prosecution costs arising from the original trial and the subsequent appeal will be in the region of £220,000.

Owing to the way CPS records are kept, figures on the number of mothers charged with infanticide and mothers charged with the murder of their own children cannot be produced without incurring disproportionate costs.

The Crown Prosecution Service was set up by the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 to take over the conduct of criminal cases instituted by the police (other than some minor cases). It has no statutory power to initiate a review of family court cases in which evidence was given by Professor Meadow.

Information on the number of cases in the Family Court in which Professor Meadow has given evidence is not held centrally. The Crown is not usually party to Family Court cases.

No guidance to Crown. Prosecutors relating specifically to mothers accused of killing their infant children has been issued.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefits

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if the Department will reinstate in its website's section on benefit expenditure tables, tables 1 and 2, showing detailed benefit spending from 1993–94 onwards. [147014]

Mr. Pond: The information requested has been posted on the Department's website, updated to include pre-Budget report 2003 expenditure forecasts.

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people drew their benefits at *(a)* Belgrave branch post office, *(b)* Dosthill branch post office, *(c)* Kerria road branch post office, *(d)* Hockley branch post office, *(e)* Kettlebrook branch post office, *(f)* Silver Link branch post office, *(g)* Two Gates branch post office and *(h)* Wilnecote branch post office in Tamworth in the last (i) week, (ii) month and (iii) year for which figures are available. [147035]

Mr. Pond: The information is not available in the format requested.

Statistics are not held on payment data on an individual Post Office basis.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the reasons for differences between the figures in table 5 of his Department's Benefit Expenditure Tables and the estimates for social security benefit expenditure provided in table B13 of the pre-Budget report. [147415]

Mr. Pond: Table 5 of the DWP Benefit Expenditure Tables and the estimates for social security benefit expenditure provided in table B13 of the pre-Budget report do not have the same coverage of Government Spending. DWP Benefit Expenditure Tables cover those benefits for which DWP has policy responsibility, only covering Great Britain (except for Over 75 TV Licences). The pre-Budget report figures represent a broader measure of social security benefit expenditure, covering all of the United Kingdom.

Further details of the differences can be found in the notes accompanying the expenditure tables on the Department's website.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mike Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what percentage of people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments for 2003 received their payments by *(a)* 1 December 2003 and *(b)* 1 January; and if he will make a statement; [147476]

(2) what percentage of people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments for 2003 have received their payments; and if he will make a statement. [147477]

Malcolm Wicks: To date a total of 11,570,389 Winter Fuel Payments have been made in Great Britain for winter 2003–04. Of these 11,543,117 were issued by

1 December 2003. A further 27,272 payments were processed and issued by 1 January 2004.

We cannot provide an estimate of the percentage of eligible people in receipt of a Winter Fuel Payment using DWP administrative data because we do not have complete information on household circumstances and payments are based on household composition.

Mike Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps have been taken to ensure that all people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments for 2003 have received their payments; and if he will make a statement. [147478]

Malcolm Wicks: Most payments are made automatically, without the need to claim. Each year, we are able to identify most people likely to become newly eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment using current departmental records and they are sent claim forms automatically with an invitation to make a claim. This year they have until 30 March 2004 to make their claim.

From June each year a publicity campaign is launched which continues through to the cut off date for applications in March. The campaign includes advertisements in national and regional press and leaflets and posters. There is also a Winter Fuel Payment helpline which is open all year round and information on the internet which is updated each year with specific details for that year's payment.

HEALTH

Abortion

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for each of the maternal deaths associated with termination of pregnancy for the period 1991-1999, *(a)* under what section of the Abortion Act 1967 the termination of pregnancy was being performed, *(b)* at what stage of gestation the pregnancy was and *(c)* what the age of the mother was. [146478]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The following information, on the eight maternal deaths associated with termination of pregnancy for the period 1991-1999, has been taken from the relevant triennial Report on Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in the United Kingdom. This is the only information available as after preparation of the Report, and before publication, all the maternal deaths report forms and related documents and files are destroyed.

Grounds for the abortion were stated only in the reports for one case, which said "foetal abnormalities incompatible with life."

The available information for gestation is shown in the table.

Gestation	*Number of cases*
Weeks	
Under 10	2
10 to 12	1
13 to 19	3
20 plus	0
"early pregnancy"	1
"mid trimester"	1

For age, there were three references to "young woman", two for women in their "twenties" and one for a woman in her "thirties". In the other two cases, age was not stated.

Birth Defects

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effects on the incidence of birth defects of living close to landfill sites; and if he will make a statement. [143794]

Miss Melanie Johnson: A number of scientific studies have investigated whether there are higher than usual levels of congenital anomalies (birth defects) in populations living near to landfill sites, but no clear picture has emerged.

The Government commissioned the Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) at Imperial College to carry out a national study (Elliott et al, BMJ 2001; 323: 363–8, available at http://www.bmj.com. A full report is at http://www.doh.gov.uk/pdfs/report_aug13.pdf). SAHSU found a small increase in congenital anomalies in populations living close to landfill sites. The study has not shown, or indeed could show, a causal link between landfill sites and birth defects. The independent expert Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) noted that the findings for birth outcomes were not consistent, and that the study provided no evidence that the rates of anomalies increased after sites had opened. COT advised that it is inappropriate to draw firm conclusions from the results. The opinion of COT is at http://www.doh.gov.uk/cotnonfood/landfill.htm. SAHSU also specifically analysed the data on birth outcomes in populations living near "special waste" landfill sites in Scotland, and found no evidence to suggest an excess risk of congenital anomalies (Morris et al, Scottish Medical Journal 2003; 48: 105–107, www.smj.org.uk).

The Government have in place a research programme on the impacts on health of landfill sites. The report of one project, which reviewed the potential for chemicals which may be released from landfill sites to affect the unborn child, is at http://www.doh.gov.uk/landfillrep.pdf. The programme also includes reviews of the known causes and the geographical variation of congenital anomalies. Another project, funded by the Environment Agency, is undertaking detailed monitoring of emissions from landfill sites in order to assess the exposure of people living and working nearby. SAHSU is examining the geographical variation of congenital anomalies and is conducting an epidemiological study of Down's syndrome in relation to landfill sites in England and Wales.

Cardiologists

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cardiologists in the West Midlands specialise in the diagnosis and treatment of complex disorders of heart rhythm requiring ablation of parts of the conducting system; and how long the waiting list is for this treatment. [147679]

Dr. Ladyman: The table shows the number of cardiologists working within each of the West Midlands strategic health authority areas as of June 2003.

Strategic health authority	Number of cardiologists
Birmingham and the Black Country	38
West Midlands South	15
Shropshire and Staffordshire	15

Source:
Department of Health Medical and Dental Workforce Census.

The Department does not hold information centrally on the particular specialism of each clinician. Waiting times for this procedure are not collected separately from other cardiological procedures, but the maximum waiting time for all in-patient procedures is currently 12 months and will be nine months by the end of March 2005.

Castle Point and Rochford PCT

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many requests for an independent review against Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust's decisions relating to Health Care Funding have been received in the last 12 months; and how many were upheld. [147597]

Dr. Ladyman: I am advised by Essex strategic health authority (SHA) that the continuing care panel has heard one case in relation to Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust (PCT) and has one case pending.

I am further advised that in the case that was heard, the panel was of the view that the PCT's decision was correct and that the SHA was advised accordingly.

The latest published figures for national health service written complaints for 2002–03 are available on the Department's website at www.doh.gov.uk/nhscomplaints.

Dentists

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* principal and *(b)* assistant dentists there were in (i) England, (ii) each NHS region and (iii) each strategic health authority who (A) offered NHS treatment and (B) had vacancies for NHS patients, in each of the last five years. [146218]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The number of dentists providing general dental services dentistry in September in each of the years 1999 to 2003 is shown in table 1, separately for principal dentists and for dental assistants. The figures given prior to 2002 are derived from the old health authority areas.

Information on dentists taking on new national health service patients is available on the www.nhs.uk/ web-site. The number of dentists accepting new NHS patients on 4 December 2003 is shown in table 2 for three main patient categories. This information is not available separately for principals and assistants. Earlier information is not available.

Table 1: Number of general dental service dentists in England by region and strategic health authority for September 1999 to 2003

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Principal Dentists					
Region					
England	16,089	16,276	16,396	16,445	16,649
Northern and Yorkshire	1,912	1,927	1,986	—	—
Trent	1,428	1,441	1,450	—	—
West Midlands	1,498	1,524	1,516	—	—
North West	2,091	2,096	2,103	—	—
Eastern	1,664	1,672	1,708	—	—
London	2,744	2,790	2,815	—	—
South East	3,005	3,039	3,090	—	—
South and West	1,747	1,787	1,783	—	—
Strategic Health Authority					
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	802	796	796	787	679
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	584	583	599	588	563
Birmingham and The Black Country	630	630	631	648	890
Cheshire and Merseyside	756	763	764	762	764
County Durham and Tees Valley	319	323	334	345	489
Coventry, Warks, Herefordshire and Worcs.	471	477	477	489	493
Cumbria and Lancashire	591	586	598	595	658
Dorset and Somerset	400	419	413	416	498
Essex	465	480	494	474	477
Greater Manchester	909	916	911	844	678
Hampshire and Isle Of Wight	557	565	568	565	431
Kent and Medway	521	509	508	505	680
Leics, Northants and Rutland	411	405	411	416	588
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	615	609	615	624	807
North and East Yorkshire and N. Lincs	472	483	501	503	473
North Central London	527	537	541	552	368
North East London	420	431	442	417	532
North West London	786	800	792	771	675
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	439	442	448	458	407
Shropshire and Staffordshire	397	417	408	415	492
South East London	482	505	503	492	504
South West London	529	517	537	541	169
South West Peninsula	545	572	574	557	511
South Yorkshire	314	327	333	408	400

Table 1: Number of general dental service dentists in England by region and strategic health authority for September 1999 to 2003

	1999	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
Surrey and Sussex	1,025	1,050	1,081	1,080	1,009
Thames Valley	749	768	782	783	829
Trent	716	717	716	725	859
West Yorkshire	657	649	674	685	726
Assistant Dentists					
Region					
England	1,042	1,151	1,274	1,366	1,312
Northern and Yorkshire	54	59	68	—	—
Trent	61	66	88	—	—
West Midlands	69	57	88	—	—
North West	95	76	98	—	—
Eastern	178	290	253	—	—
London	272	269	295	—	—
South East	211	223	273	—	—
South and West	102	111	133	—	—
Strategic health authority					
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	52	68	67	65	67
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	44	105	84	92	43
Birmingham and The Black Country	27	29	41	43	67
Cheshire and Merseyside	42	30	43	41	52
County Durham and Tees Valley	10	7	12	10	16
Coventry, Warks, Herefordshire and Worcs.	18	14	24	22	44
Cumbria and Lancashire	28	24	29	30	44
Dorset and Somerset	22	18	30	37	39
Essex	53	57	52	58	56
Greater Manchester	27	25	31	34	41
Hampshire and Isle Of Wight	66	44	64	71	38
Kent and Medway	35	50	53	66	76
Leics, Northants and Rutland	14	17	19	19	52
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	81	128	117	125	107
North and East Yorkshire and N. Lincs	18	20	15	15	29
North Central London	46	69	51	53	19
North East London	82	52	60	61	60
North West London	67	64	83	77	52
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	10	8	8	14	21
Shropshire and Staffordshire	24	14	23	16	22
South East London	43	38	45	40	47
South West London	34	46	56	54	10
South West Peninsula	28	25	36	43	37
South Yorkshire	14	12	16	19	31
Surrey and Sussex	50	64	79	82	74
Thames Valley	51	53	69	79	56
Trent	38	45	53	74	67
West Yorkshire	18	25	36	26	45

Note:
Assistant dentist numbers do not include VDP's (vocational dental practitioners).

Table 2: Number of general dental service dentists recorded on NHS.UK as accepting new NHS patients by strategic health authority on 4 December 2003.

Strategic Health Authority	*Charge paying adults*	*Charge exempt adults*	*Children*
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	71	103	146
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	455	537	650
Birmingham and the Black Country	469	506	552
Cheshire and Merseyside	571	616	756
County Durham and Tees Valley	375	384	412
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire	197	200	270
Cumbria and Lancashire	102	212	102
Dorset and Somerset	61	60	81
Essex	325	325	436
Greater Manchester	450	430	574
Hampshire and Isle Of Wight	69	103	184
Kent and Medway	173	233	313
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland	167	164	184
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	413	437	543
North and East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire	127	156	191
North Central London	390	392	486
North East London	267	294	252

Table 2: Number of general dental service dentists recorded on NHS.UK as accepting new NHS patients by strategic health authority on 4 December 2003.

Strategic Health Authority	*Charge paying adults*	*Charge exempt adults*	*Children*
North West London	369	465	568
Northumberland, Tyne And Wear	468	456	479
Shropshire and Staffordshire	67	85	159
South East London	406	529	586
South West London	260	323	382
South West Peninsula	84	41	130
South Yorkshire	250	202	288
Surrey and Sussex	362	455	689
Thames Valley	246	302	449
Trent	435	461	526
West Yorkshire	294	359	390

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people aged *(a)* 17 years or under and *(b)* 18 years or over were registered with an NHS dentist in (i) England, (ii) each NHS region and (iii) each strategic health authority in each of the last five years; and what proportion each represents of the relevant age group. [146219]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The information showing the number of people and the percentage of the population registered with a general dental service dentist by national health service region and strategic health authority at 30 September for each of the last five years, has been placed in the Library. The figures given prior to 2002 are derived from the old health authority areas. Following reorganisation, figures for NHS regions are not available from September 2002 onwards.

Registrations lapse if patients do not return to their dentist within 15 months and so the registration figures exclude patients who have not been to their dentist within the past 15 months. The figures also exclude patients who receive dental treatment from other NHS dental services including dental access centres and those patients who choose not to register and who seek treatment on an occasional basis.

Domiciliary Care

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date applications for registration with the National Care Standards Commission are required to be determined. [147310]

Dr. Ladyman: There is no time limit for applications for registration with the National Care Standards Commission to be determined.

Drugs Treatment

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which constituencies in the UK do not have a needle exchange. [147763]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* We do not measure needle exchange coverage by parliamentary consituency. However, we do record it on a primary care trust (PCT) basis. Every PCT in England has access to a needle exchange service, distributing approximately 27 million needles annually.

Influenza Vaccination

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has given to local primary care trusts on the provision of influenza jabs to carers. [146453]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Guidance has been issued on the immunisation of health and social care staffs who are recommended to receive flu vaccine. Carers are not routinely offered flu vaccination but general practitioners retain the discretion to give the vaccine to their patients based on an individual assessment of need.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people aged 65 years and over have received the influenza vaccine *(a)* in England and *(b)* broken down by (i) primary care trust and (ii) strategic health authority in each year since 2001. [147183]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The total number of people aged 65 and over who received flu immunisation in England in 2001 was 5,113,036 and in 2002 was 5,487,645. The data for 2003 is not yet available.

Information on the number of people aged 65 and over receiving flu immunisation by primary care trust and strategic health authority since 2001 has been placed in the Library.

Leak Inquiries

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list occasions on which his Department has conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if he will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [146942]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Since 1997 the department has investigated 37 suspected leaks. In line with exemptions 1(a) and 7(b) set out in Part II of the "Code of Practice" on access to "Government Information", it has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements. Other than cases where legal action has been taken we are not aware of any cases where names have been made public.

Ministerial Visits

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many visits have been made by his Department's officials or ministers to look at drugs treatment in *(a)* Sweden, *(b)* France, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* the Netherlands and *(e)* USA in the last six years. [147764]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* Departmental officials have had occasion to visit Sweden, Australia and the Netherlands to look at their drug treatment systems within the last six years. Most regular contact is maintained through the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon, Portugal, where Departmental officials meet with colleagues from other countries two to three times a year.

Myoclonic Epilepsy

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on the funding of equipment and clothing for children with myoclonic epilepsy and cerebal palsy; and if he will make a statement. [147244]

Dr. Ladyman: The needs of individual disabled children are assessed by councils with social services responsibilities, principally under provisions of the Children Act 1989. Councils then have a responsibility to provide appropriate services.

NHS Charges

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the responses he received to proposed amendments to the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989: A Consultation. [146353]

Mr. Hutton: 124 specific responses to the consultation exercise were received. Two of the respondents have exercised their right to have their responses kept confidential. The remaining 122 are available in the Library.

Obesity

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women were classed as obese in each year since 1990 in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region, broken down by social/economic status. [146332]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Information is not available in exactly the form requested. Figures available from the Health Survey for England are shown in the tables. The tables give, for England, the percentage of women who are obese (with a body mass index over 30) from 1991, when the Health Survey began, to 2002 by social class and for the period 1998 to 2002 by Government Office Region. Figures prior to 1998 are not available by Government Office Region. The samples sizes available in the Health Survey do not allow robust estimates to be calculated for each region broken down by social/economic status.

Prevalence of obesity among women by survey year and social class—aged 16 and over with a valid height and weight measurement—1991–2002

Percentage

	Social class of head of household[1]						
	I	*II*	*IIIN*	*IIIM*	*IV*	*V*	*Total*
Women							
1991–92[2]	11	11	15	20	21	21	16
1993	11	13	13	20	22	24	16
1994	12	14	15	20	22	22	17
1995	12	14	14	20	24	22	17
1996	13	15	16	21	22	27	18
1997	10	15	20	23	26	24	20
1998	15	18	19	24	25	28	21
1999	21	18	21	21	24	31	21
2000	19	17	19	26	26	32	21
2001	14	20	21	27	31	28	23
2002	16	18	22	25	29	35	23
Bases							
1991–92[2]	1,219		493	912	681		3,430
1993	579	2,210	1,239	2,149	1,106	440	8,037
1994	433	2,000	1,184	2,016	1,168	458	7,884
1995	465	2,112	1,147	1,979	1,056	453	7,729
1996	461	2,255	1,230	2,043	1,135	424	8,064
1997[3]	261	1,160	671	1,100	655	230	4,254
1998	471	2,231	1,193	1,983	1,201	429	7,730
1999[3]	248	1,049	585	1,000	557	157	3,699
2000[3]	198	1,193	654	806	496	189	3,703
2001	412	2,278	1,304	1,710	1,078	386	7,414
2002[3]	244	1,077	614	775	516	178	3,509

[1] I—Professional, II—Managerial technical, IIIN—Skilled non-manual, IIIM—Skilled manual, IV—Semi-skilled manual, V—Unskilled manual.

[2] The sample sizes in 1991 and 1992 were smaller than in subsequent years and for reporting purposes the estimates from both years were combined. In addition, the figures for social classes I and II, and IV and V were combined.

[3] In these years the focus was on special groups such as children, ethnic minorities and older people. The sample for the special groups was boosted and the sample for the general population correspondingly halved to about 8,000 adults. The figures above are based on the general population sample.

Source:

Health Survey for England, Department of Health

Prevalence of obesity among women by Government Office Region—aged 16 and over with both valid height and weight measurements—1998–2002

Percentage

BMI (kg/m²)	*Government Office Regions[1]* *North East*	*North West*	*Yorkshire and the Humber*	*East Midlands*	*West Midlands*
Women					
1998	22.9	21.3	21.7	22.1	25.8
1999	17.3	21.3	20.0	27.7	22.0
2000	22.0	22.7	19.7	24.8	26.3
2001	24.9	21.0	25.4	24.9	27.6
2002	19.8	24.6	24.0	27.6	25.4
Bases					
1998	484	1,082	819	763	671
1999	225	530	401	401	381
2000	245	519	437	416	327
2001	494	1,001	800	703	800
2002	222	505	387	344	355

BMI (kg/m²)	*Government Office Regions[1]* *East of England*	*London*	*South East*	*South West*	*England*
Women					
1998	21.6	19.5	19.3	19.4	21.2
1999	20.1	20.3	17.8	23.1	21.1
2000	19.3	21.8	19.4	17.4	21.4
2001	23.8	19.9	21.8	24.1	23.5
2002	22.1	25.5	19.3	16.6	22.8
Bases					
1998	862	960	1,216	526	7,730
1999	433	395	551	381	3,699
2000	414	440	536	368	3,703
2001	865	800	1,132	814	7,414
2002	390	411	564	331	3,509

[1] Figures prior to 1998 not available by Government Office Region.
Source:
Health Survey for England, Department of Health

Salt Depletion

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent research has been conducted by his Department on salt depletion in the human body during hot weather. [146680]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department has not conducted any research on salt depletion in the human body during hot weather. There is insufficient evidence to suggest that people should modify their normal salt consumption during hot weather conditions. It is, however, important to maintain an adequate fluid intake.

Thyroid Cancer

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what clinical trials have been conducted to establish the effectiveness of potassium iodate tablets in minimising the effects resulting from inhalation of airborne radioactive iodine, with particular reference to prevention of thyroid cancer; and if he will make a statement. [147205]

Dr. John Reid: Stable iodine (of which potassium iodate is only one form) has been used clinically since the 1940s to protect the thyroid glands of patients (both children and adults) being treated with radio-pharmaceuticals which contain radioactive iodine. Potassium iodate is still routinely used in this way to this day. Its efficacy at protecting against the radiation induced thyroid cancer has been known, therefore, for over 60 years. The largest population administration occurred in Poland following the Chernobyl accident where over 9 million doses were administered. No adverse effects were reported and no increase in the rate of thyroid cancer was subsequently seen, unlike in Belorus and Ukraine were stable iodine was not administered to protect the local population.

Daily Winter Reporting System

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions his daily winter reporting system has indicated that NHS trusts are experiencing winter pressures; and in how many of those instances he has authorised escalation procedures to respond. [147033]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The first full month of daily winter reporting was December. In December, there were an average of 20 National Health Service trusts (out of a total of 155 trusts with accident and emergency

departments) per working day reporting operational problems. Such operational problems include the cancellation of elective operations.

All strategic health authorities (SHAs) have developed robust winter plans, which set out escalation procedures to cope with increased seasonal demand for health services. The decision on whether a trust should put these escalation procedures into operation is not made by ministers or the Department of Health. Instead, the locally agreed escalation procedures are activated by the trusts themselves, in agreement with local primary care trusts and the SHA. Such an approach allows the local NHS to be timely in dealing with pressures and is in line with the Government policy of Shifting the Balance of Power to the local NHS. If required, the Department of Health will support a SHA in its local management of winter.

TREASURY

Birth Certificates

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many babies were born to unmarried mothers for whom no name of the father was entered on the birth certificate in each of the last 30 years, or in those years for which figures are available; what the *(a)* social class and *(b)* age of the mother at the birth of her first child was in each case; and how many subsequent births, when the name of the father was not entered on the birth certificate of the child, each mother had.

[147176]

Ruth Kelly *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from John Pullinger to Mr. Frank Field, dated 14 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your request for information on previous and subsequent births of mothers who had a birth registered without a father's name on the birth certificate (a sole registration) in each of the last 30 years. In particular you asked for information on *(a)* the social class and *(b)* the mother's age at her first live birth, and for information on how many of subsequent sole registered births the mother had. I am replying in the National Statistician's absence. (147176)

Information is readily available, from birth registration records, on sole registration births by age of mother. However under the Population (statistics) Acts 1938 and 1960, information on birth order (that is whether a birth is a first birth, second birth etc.) is not collected at birth registration for women who are not married to the father of the child. Table 1, attached, provides information on the number of sole registrations by age of mother in each of the last 30 years (1973–2002).

Similarly only limited information is readily available by social class from birth registration records. Social class of mother and father first became available separately from 1986. Only 10 per cent. of births are coded for social class and for around two thirds of sole registrations there is insufficient occupation data to assign a social class. Table 2 provides a summary of the readily available information on social class for sole registered births, 1986 to 2001. In 2001 the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification was introduced, replacing social class, and from 2002 data are not available by social class.

To provide information on age at first live birth and on any subsequent sole registration requires successive birth records to be linked together. This can only be done using the ONS Longitudinal Study, a one per cent. sample of the population in which, since 1971, census records and vital events have been linked together. Extracting this information cannot be done in the time available to answer this Parliamentary Question. I will write to you again in two weeks to let you know whether the information available from this study is of sufficient quality to answer your question. You should note that, as there is currently only 30 years of birth registration records in the study, only a small proportion of women in the sample have a complete birth history that allows identification of sole registrations. It is therefore very unlikely that the last part of your question (on the number of subsequent sole registered births) can yet be answered reliably.

Table 1 Live births outside marriage registered by mother alone (sole registrations), by mother's age 1973–2002. England and Wales

		Age of mother							
	All ages	*<20*	*20–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40+*	*Mean age*	*Percentage*[1]
1973	31,168	14,408	9,774	3,972	1,825	887	302	22.0	4.6
1974	29,398	13,986	9,144	3,709	1,506	808	245	21.8	4.6
1975	27,986	13,480	8,503	3,503	1,499	750	251	21.8	4.6
1976	26,359	12,631	7,981	3,406	1,416	705	220	21.9	4.5
1977	26,064	12,201	8,066	3,335	1,557	684	221	22.0	4.6
1978	27,835	12,778	8,849	3,558	1,717	718	215	22.0	4.7
1979	31,118	13,712	10,127	4,175	2,026	824	254	22.2	4.9
1980	33,204	14,032	11,340	4,516	2,176	869	271	22.3	5.1
1981	33,758	14,047	11,589	4,700	2,290	878	254	22.4	5.3
1982	36,453	14,453	12,991	5,383	2,298	1,086	242	22.5	5.8
1983	38,417	14,351	14,093	5,819	2,651	1,225	278	22.7	6.1
1984	40,593	14,928	14,876	6,383	2,824	1,269	313	22.8	6.4
1985	44,458	15,872	16,440	7,358	3,146	1,364	278	22.9	6.8
1986	47,822	16,379	17,922	8,246	3,479	1,479	317	23.0	7.2
1987	50,474	16,787	18,944	8,909	3,875	1,609	350	23.1	7.4
1988	53,944	17,098	20,350	10,185	4,320	1,642	349	23.3	7.8
1989	53,537	16,142	20,179	10,399	4,600	1,781	436	23.5	7.8
1990	54,831	16,191	20,135	11,140	5,006	1,933	426	23.7	7.8
1991	54,131	15,249	19,671	11,396	5,398	1,973	444	23.9	7.7
1992	51,472	13,457	18,370	11,421	5,642	2,133	449	24.2	7.5
1993	50,242	12,535	17,476	11,418	5,967	2,336	510	24.5	7.5
1994	49,030	12,007	16,408	11,390	6,204	2,501	520	24.7	7.4
1995	47,916	11,880	15,626	10,864	6,485	2,529	532	24.8	7.4
1996	51,016	12,946	16,245	11,350	6,978	2,891	606	24.8	7.9
1997	50,582	13,223	15,590	11,015	6,997	3,050	707	24.8	7.9
1998	49,960	13,830	14,838	10,672	6,768	3,151	701	24.8	7.9

Table 1 Live births outside marriage registered by mother alone (sole registrations), by mother's age 1973–2002. England and Wales

		Age of mother							
	All ages	*< 20*	*20–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40+*	*Mean age*	*Percentage*[1]
1999	48,203	13,194	14,477	9,936	6,615	3,221	760	24.9	7.8
2000	45,773	12,459	13,919	9,213	6,116	3,309	757	24.9	7.6
2001	43,744	11,669	13,583	8,582	5,875	3,213	822	25.0	7.4
2002	43,129	11,229	13,599	8,133	5,949	3,373	846	25.1	7.2

[1] All sole registrations as a percentage of all births.

Table 2 Live births outside marriage registered by mother alone, by mother's social class 1986–2001. England and Wales

Numbers (thousands) and percentage of all births

	Social class of mother[1]							
	Non manual		Manual					
	I	*II*	*IIIN*	*IIIM*	*IV*	*V*	*Others*[2]	*Total*
Number								
1986	0.1	1.9	5.4	1.7	4.3	0.3	34.0	47.8
1987	0.1	2.2	5.7	1.9	4.8	0.4	35.3	50.5
1988	0.1	2.5	6.1	2.3	5.5	0.5	37.0	53.9
1989	0.1	2.8	6.5	2.5	5.7	0.5	35.5	53.5
1990	0.2	2.8	6.8	2.6	5.6	0.5	36.4	54.8
1991	0.1	3.1	6.6	2.4	4.7	0.9	36.4	54.1
1992	0.1	3.1	6.0	2.3	4.3	0.7	35.0	51.5
1993	0.1	2.8	6.1	2.2	4.0	0.8	34.2	50.2
1994	0.1	3.1	5.1	2.3	4.3	0.6	33.6	49.0
1995	0.2	2.7	6.1	2.3	4.6	0.7	31.4	47.9
1996	0.2	3.2	6.1	2.3	4.8	0.9	33.7	51.0
1997	0.2	3.4	6.1	2.4	5.2	0.9	32.4	50.6
1998	0.2	3.4	6.1	2.6	5.5	0.8	31.4	50.0
1999	0.2	3.5	5.8	2.2	5.2	0.8	30.5	48.2
2000	0.2	3.5	5.5	2.0	4.3	0.6	29.7	45.8
2001	0.2	3.2	5.4	1.8	4.6	0.5	28.0	43.7
Percentage of all livebirths								
1986	1.4	3.0	6.3	9.2	15.0	11.1	7.4	7.2
1987	1.3	2.8	5.5	8.8	13.8	12.0	8.3	7.4
1988	1.0	2.9	5.0	8.6	13.4	12.0	9.1	7.8
1989	1.2	2.9	5.2	8.9	13.2	11.9	9.6	7.8
1990	1.5	2.6	4.9	8.3	12.0	11.0	9.9	7.8
1991	1.0	2.8	4.7	7.5	10.6	13.1	10.5	7.7
1992	1.0	2.7	4.2	6.9	9.6	9.7	10.2	7.5
1993	1.0	2.4	4.4	7.1	8.9	9.8	10.5	7.5
1994	0.7	2.6	3.6	7.6	9.3	7.9	11.0	7.4
1995	1.6	2.3	4.1	7.1	9.2	8.9	11.5	7.4
1996	1.0	2.5	4.1	7.0	8.8	11.3	12.5	7.9
1997	1.4	2.7	4.4	7.8	9.6	12.2	13.1	7.9
1998	0.9	2.5	4.5	8.0	10.5	10.8	12.7	7.9
1999	1.1	2.6	4.3	7.0	10.0	11.9	12.8	7.8
2000	0.9	2.6	4.4	6.2	8.9	9.8	12.7	7.6
2001	1.1	2.3	4.2	6.2	9.6	9.1	12.1	7.4

[1] Social class classifications are: non-manual; I professional; II managerial and technical; IIIN skilled occupations (non-manual); manual; IIIM skilled occupations (manual); IV partly skilled occupations; V unskilled occupations; other.
[2] Includes unemployed, armed forces, students and inadequately described occupations.
Note:
Mothers occupation was not recorded before 1986.
Based on a 10 per cent. sample of births.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Totnes of 9 December 2003 regarding the overpayment and underpayment of tax credits to constituents in Totnes and Brixham. [147782]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue replied on behalf of the Paymaster General on 13 January 2004.

Departmental Advertising

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been spent on recruitment advertisements in the press, broken down by publication, by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* quangos under the Department and *(c)* non-departmental Government bodies under the Department (i) in the last year and (ii) since 1997. [145809]

Ruth Kelly: Available information concerning recruitment advertising costs is given in the tables. HM Customs and Excise, the Inland Revenue and the Office

for National Statistics delegate much of their recruitment to their various business elements. In consequence, only limited information is available.

A breakdown of all publications used could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The departments and agencies responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer use a wide variety of different publications for recruitment advertising, tailored according to the nature of the vacancy to be filled. This includes the use of professional journals and magazines, national and local newspapers, and websites.

HM Treasury

Information for the financial years 1997–2002 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Recruitment advertising costs for the most recent financial years are as follows:

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
2002–03	[2]126,238
2003–04 to date	[3]173,279

[1] excluding VAT

[2] This does not include the advertising costs for two posts for which figures were unavailable.

[3] This includes advertisements for two 'bulk' recruitment campaigns which were used to fill a number of posts, and advertisements for three roles at a senior level.

HM Customs and Excise

Customs and Excise delegate much of their recruitment to their various business areas. Information held centrally is limited, and therefore data could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Debt Management Office

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
1998–99[2]	23,950.03
1999–2000	62,895.42
2000–01	101,731.50
2001–02	31,840.15
2002–03	20,790.45
2003–04 to date	65,445.74

[1] including VAT

[2] The DMO was only established on 1 April 1998 and therefore no data exists prior to this date.

The Government Actuary's Department

Information for 1997 to 2001 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for the financial years since 2001 is as follows:

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
2001–02	27,083.75
2002–03	16,614.50
2003–04 to date	22,993.58

[1] including VAT

Inland Revenue

The amount spent on press advertising by the Inland Revenue from April 1997 to March 2003 (the last full financial year for which figures are available) was £4.2 million. The figure for the last full year (2002–03) was £1.3 million. A breakdown of all costs since 1997 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the vast majority of Inland Revenue recruitment advertising appears in local or regional newspapers.

National Savings and Investments

Since January 2003, National Savings and Investments has spent £92,874 on recruitment advertising exclusive of VAT. Costs for previous financial years are as follows:

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
1997–98	5,345
1998–99	32,711
1999–2000	166,731
2000–01	153,243
2001–02	205,878
2002–03	116,778

[1] excluding VAT

Office of Government Commerce

The following costs cover the period from April 2000 when OGC was first established to December 2003. Due to the merger of three ledger systems it has not been possible to disaggregate the April 2000 to March 2001 figures.

Spend on recruitment advertising since formation of OGC in April 2000.

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
From April 2000–01	[2]191,566.13
2002–03	351,576.74
2003–04 to date	280,009.06

[1] including VAT

[2] OGC was only established in April 2000 and therefore no data exists prior to this date.

OGC Buying Solutions

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
From April 2000–01	[2]73,231
2002–03	82,670
2003–04 to date	60,933

[1] including VAT

[2] OGC was only established in April 2000 and therefore no data exists prior to this date.

Office for National Statistics

Recruitment is carried out across several sites, and therefore information held centrally is limited. The data could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Royal Mint

Advertising expenditure 1997–2003

Financial year	*Cost (£)*[1]
1997–98	39,070.60
1998–99	53,355.87
1999–2000	64,292.58
2000–01	61,255.66
2001–02	15,375.30
2002–03	17,620.21
2003–04 to date	32,805.44

[1] excluding VAT

Valuation Office Agency

Advertising expenditure 1997–2003

Financial year	*Cost (£)*
1997–98	[1]13,308.71
1998–99	[1]20,637.36
1999–2000	[1]30,089.83
2000–01	[1]36,181.67

Financial year	Cost (£)
2001–02	[1]47,372.60
2002–03	[2,3]120,649.41
2003 to date	[2]154,814.20

[1] excluding VAT
[2] including VAT
[3] VOA accounting practices were changed to include VAT with effect from financial year 2002–03 onwards.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146911]

Mr. Boateng: There are no Treasury staff working in North Staffordshire or the West Midlands.

End of Year Returns

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses employing *(a)* less than 50 staff and *(b)* between 50 and 249 staff have filed their employer's end of year returns electronically for each year since 2000. [147602]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue does not have this information.

Brian Cotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his Department's plan to bring forward regulations for the introduction of mandatory electronic filing of employers' end of year returns. [147608]

Dawn Primarolo: Following consultation two Statutory Instruments (SI 2003/2494 and SI 2003/2495) were laid on 29 September 2003 and came into force on 20 October. The first of these requires the e-filing of an employer's end of year PAYE return from May 2005 where the employer has 250 or more employees, and from May 2006 where the employer has between 50 and 249 employees. The second makes e-filing incentives available to employers with fewer than 50 employees over the five years from the 2004–05 tax year. In accordance with these regulations, the Inland Revenue has sent a letter to every employer on their database setting out the employer size band for 2004–05 and giving guidance about e-filing options.

Family Tax Credits

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many outstanding family tax credit cases were awaiting processing on 31 December 2003. [146842]

Dawn Primarolo *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* There are currently around 20,000 claims (60 per cent. of which have been received in the past four weeks) which are waiting further information or being verified.

Financial Services

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact outsourcing of financial services operations to foreign countries will have on the UK economy and its skilled labour market. [147640]

Ruth Kelly: Despite fears of outsourcing abroad having an adverse effect on UK employment, the performance of the UK labour market over recent years has been strong by both international and historical standards. The UK has the highest employment rate and the lowest unemployment rate among the G7 economies.

Moreover most jobs outsourced tend to be at low to intermediate skill levels. The Government's policies aim to ensure that those whose jobs are directly affected can acquire new skills and move quickly into alternative employment.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent the Financial Services Sector Skills Council will duplicate the work of existing examining bodies in the financial services sector. [147641]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services Sector Skills Council (FSSSC) will not duplicate the work of existing examining bodies in the financial services sector.

The FSSSC will work closely with a range of industry bodies, including the Financial Services Authority and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to ensure the qualifications that employers want. This will include reviewing the suitability of existing training programmes and qualifications to meet sector needs and, where there are gaps, working with awarding bodies in the sector to develop new qualifications. The QCA will retain responsibility for maintaining the rigour and fitness for purpose of the national qualifications framework, ensuring qualifications are robust and reliable measures of achievement.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Financial Services Authority has levied in fines since its foundation; and how much of this has been rebated to regulated firms by way of reduced fees. [147756]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has been able to levy fines on regulated bodies since 1 December 2001, and has levied £18,544,000 to date. The FSA reduces the amount charged to all fee-payers in any one financial year by the amount of financial penalties received in the preceding financial year. To date, £9,269,000 the FSA has been rebated by way of reduced fees.

Public Sector Pensions

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the level of pension liabilities in the public sector due to final salary pension schemes. [147766]

Ruth Kelly: The level of unfunded pension liabilities are published in the Resource Accounts of the separate schemes. The latest aggregate estimate, based on the 2001–02 accounts, is of accrued liabilities of £380 billion as at 31 March 2002. The figure will be updated when the 2002–03 Resource Accounts are published shortly.

It does not include the liabilities of the funded Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The latest estimate of their liabilities were set out on 17 March

2003, *Official Report*, column 614W. It also does not include the funded liabilities of schemes in the wider public sector run by statutory corporations. Information on these schemes are not held centrally and the responsibility for them rests with the relevant sponsoring Departments.

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department is taking to reduce the public sector pensions liabilities caused by final salary pension schemes. [147767]

Mr. Boateng: Public service pension schemes are reviewed regularly to ensure that the benefits represent value for money and continue to contribute to the overall aim of the remuneration package to recruit, retain and motivate staff. As part of this process the Government recently announced its decision to raise the normal pension age of public servants from 60 to 65 in the Green Paper "Action on Occupational Pensions" Cm 5835, June 2003. Schemes are consulting on how this might be achieved.

The pension liabilities arising from rights accrued to date cannot be adjusted: the private sector is protected by section 67 of the Pensions Scheme Act 1995 and the public services by the Superannuation Act 1972.

Small Incorporated Businesses

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what studies he has undertaken to determine whether small incorporated businesses are paying the wrong amounts of tax on profits extracted from their companies; [147055]

(2) what proposals he has to ensure that small scale enterprises are fully aware of the tax distinctions between their being *(a)* incorporated and *(b)* unincorporated; [147085]

(3) if he will make a statement on his proposals to ensure that the right amount of tax is paid by owner managers of small incorporated businesses on the profits extracted from their companies; [147056]

(4) if he will define *(a)* profit extraction and *(b)* acceptable profit extraction for small incorporated businesses; [147057]

(5) if he will consult small owner managed incorporated businesses on his proposals to ensure that their tax contributions are correct in the light of the contents of paragraph 5.91 of Command Paper 6042; [147082]

(6) whether it is his Department's policy to encourage sole traders or partnerships to become small limited companies; [147083]

(7) whether his proposals in paragraph 5.91 of Command Paper 6042 will include measures to help small incorporated businesses to unincorporated; [147084]

(8) whether the right amount of tax referred to in paragraph 5.91 of Command Paper 6042 includes National Insurance. [147086]

Dawn Primarolo: The Government have introduced a number of measures to support unincorporated businesses, including cutting the basic rate of income tax, the introduction of the 10p starting rate of income tax, permanent 40 per cent. first year capital allowances and the introduction of the VAT flat rate scheme.

Paragraph 5.91 of the 2003 Pre-Budget Report (Command Paper 6042) announced that the Government would bring forward proposals, to ensure that the right amount of tax is paid by owner managers of small incorporated businesses on the profits received from their company, protecting the benefits of low tax rates for the majority of small businesses.

The appropriate details and definitions will be set out in the Budget Report.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many owner managed small incorporated businesses pay tax. [147058]

Dawn Primarolo: There is currently no precise definition within current tax legislation of 'owner manager'. This issue is among those being considered by the Government in the context of its announcement in paragraph 5.91 of the 2003 Pre-Budget Report.

Tax Credits

Mr. Webb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many child and working tax credit recipients have reported changes in circumstances since being informed of their initial award. [146763]

Dawn Primarolo *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Information is not available in the form requested.

UK Company Profitability

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what the profitability of UK companies with a turnover of *(a)* less than £1 million, *(b)* £1–20 million, *(c)* £20–50 million, *(d)* £50–100 million and *(e)* more than £100 million has been in each quarter since 1997; [148180]

(2) what the profitability of UK companies with *(a)* 1–49 employees, *(b)* 50–99 employees, *(c)* 100–249 employees, *(d)* 250–499 employees, *(e)* 500–999 employees and *(f)* more than 1,000 employees has been in each quarter since 1997. [148181]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Mr. Colin Mowl to Mr. Stephen O'Brien, dated 14 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions on profitability of UK companies by turnover and also by number of employees. I am replying in his absence. (148180, 148181)

Unfortunately the Office for National Statistics (ONS) do not produce statistics on profitability of UK companies by turnover or by number of employees. The ONS does produce a quarterly First Release called the Profitability of UK Companies, which is available on the ONS website at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/profit0104.pdf

The Release shows the profitability of all UK companies and also for United Kingdom continental shelf companies, manufacturing companies and service companies. The profits data used in calculating these estimates comes from a relatively small sample inquiry of companies. The sample is too small to enable us to produce estimates in the detail requested.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 January 2004

TRANSPORT

Cycling

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's strategy for *(a)* increasing cycle journeys and *(b)* reducing cycling injuries and deaths. [146827]

Mr. Jamieson: We are improving cycling infrastructure and have initiated the Cycling Projects Fund to give over £4 million for local cycling facilities and training. On the safety front, we are promoting training and measures which cyclists can take to protect themselves, such as making themselves conspicuous. We are also improving training and testing for motorists.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147294]

Mr. McNulty: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 516–17W by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary.

Inter-city Services (Waterloo)

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what routes passengers will be able to travel from Manchester to Waterloo to connect with the Eurostar following the withdrawal of existing services; and whether the Newport to Waterloo service will be withdrawn in May. [147969]

Mr. McNulty: Passengers can travel to London Euston and connect with London Underground services to Waterloo, a journey of around 3 hours 20 minutes (the Manchester—London Waterloo direct service takes over six hours). Direct services between Newport and London Waterloo will be withdrawn from May. However, alternative services will continue to operate to London Paddington.

DEFENCE

Communications

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Cormorant system will enter into service; and what delays have occurred in the programme. [147277]

Mr. Ingram: The Cormorant Communication System has an approved in-service date of May 2004 which is expected to be achieved. This will be some 19 months later than the latest date originally approved for entry into service.

Decoy Munitions

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which contractors tendered for the design, development, build and supply of cartridge RF distraction Mark 216 Model 3; when the winner will be announced; when production will commence; and if he will make a statement. [146632]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* The closing date for receipt of bids from industry to supply the Seagnat 216 Model 3 RF Distraction Round was 18 December 2003. I am withholding further details in accordance with Exemption 7 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information as the tender evaluation process is at a very early stage and is classified Commercial in Confidence. It is anticipated that the contract will be let by the end of May 2004, enabling production to commence to meet the stated in service date for the round, which is December 2007.

Defence Information Infrastructure Programme

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funding is being made available to the Defence Information Infrastructure (Future) Deployed programme. [147279]

Mr. Ingram: We are continuing to investigate the full requirement and costs for an enhanced Defence Information Infrastructure (DII) (Future-Deployed) capability, and no formal budget has yet been approved. Funding for some elements of the programme will come from existing provision for in-service systems that DII (Future-Deployed) will subsume, such as updates to current Navy and Army administrative information systems. Any additional funding required will be sought through the normal departmental resource planning process.

The Ministry of Defence is also investing significantly in other programmes to develop our information infrastructure for deployed operations, such as Skynet 5 (satellite communications services); Cormorant (voice and data communications services to support Joint Rapid Reaction force deployments); Falcon (tactical formation level secure communications), and Bowman (tactical secure voice and data system).

Leak Inquiries

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what inquiries his Department has conducted into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and on what occasions the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147007]

Mr. Hoon *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Since 1997, the Ministry of Defence has investigated 47 suspected leaks. In line with exemptions 1(a) and 7(b) set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

Major Ian Hill

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the findings of the Cheshire Coroner, regarding the death of Major Ian Hill; and if he will make a statement. [147143]

Mr. Caplin: We are aware of the Cheshire Coroner's conclusion of 24 November 2003 as to the death of Edward Ian Hill. To facilitate our understanding of the Cheshire Coroner's conclusion, officials wrote to him on 19 December 2003 under the Coroner Rules of 1984, requesting copies of reports of the post mortem examination and any special examinations, notes of evidence and documents put in evidence at the inquest. We understand that delivery of the letter was delayed. The Coroner has confirmed that he is dealing with our request.

Medical Flights

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many medical flights, involving civilians, were conducted by military aircraft between Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom in each of the last five years. [147521]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

We do not hold information about Medevac flights in a form which allows easy analysis of the point of origin and final destination of each trip. Those flights which cross the borders between Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom are thought to be few in number and mainly confined to transplant patients.

Microsoft

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether negotiations between his Department and Microsoft regarding future licensing arrangements have been completed; and if he will make a statement. [147552]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence has now completed negotiations with Microsoft regarding the continuation of future licensing arrangements for a range of software products (the 'Enterprise Agreement'). However, formal signature has not been completed at this stage. The new licensing arrangements will deliver savings to the Department and will come into effect in April 2004.

MOD Police Pensions

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason employment services with the armed service is not considered relevant for pensions entitlement for employees who transfer to the MOD police. [147681]

Mr. Caplin: Under the rules of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme, a civil servant whose pensionable service begins on or after 1 January 1986 may apply in writing to bring in a transfer value in respect of any accrued pension benefits within 12 months of the date on which he or she takes up pensionable service in the PCSPS.

The Public Sector Transfer Club (the Club) consists of a number of occupational pension schemes which have agreed reciprocal transfer arrangements. The Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) is a participant of the Club. Members joining the PCSPS before 6 April 1988 had to apply for a Club transfer within six months of becoming a member. Members joining after 6 April 1988 have to apply within 12 months of doing so.

Before this, arrangements were set up in 1979 to enable transfer between the AFPS and the PCSPS under which those who had left the armed forces on or after 1 April 1975 without immediate pension benefits could apply for a transfer into the PCSPS. The deadline for applications was 30 June 1980.

Reserve Forces

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many appeals have been made by employers against compulsory call-out notices to their employees in each of the last five years; and how many of those appeals were allowed in each year. [R] [147134]

Mr. Caplin: As at 12 January 2004 only 41 employers had lodged an appeal against the compulsory call-out of their employees under the appeals procedure set out in Part IX of the Reserve Forces Act 1996. Of these, seven were awarded to the Service authority, one was awarded to the employer, one remained outstanding and 32 were withdrawn before going to appeal. All of these appeals were lodged in 2003.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many compulsory call-out notices were issued to serving members of the Territorial Army in 2003; and how many of the recipients were actually mobilised. [R] [147135]

Mr. Caplin: During 2003 9,765 compulsory call-out notices were issued to serving members of the Territorial Army. Of these, 6,681 were subsequently mobilised.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many individuals have been mobilised after receiving a compulsory call-out notice more than once in the last three years. [R] [147262]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Territorial Army mobilised after receiving a compulsory call-out notice have served for *(a)* up to four months, *(b)* four to six months, *(c)* six months to one year and *(d)* over one year in the last three years. [R] [147263]

Mr. Caplin: The number of Territorial Army personnel who have been mobilised, during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2003, after receiving a compulsory call-out notice is shown according to length of service in the table.

	Number
Up to four months	3,299
Four to six months	1,573
Six months to one year	3,137
Over one year	43

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his written statement of 7 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 9–10WS, on reserve forces, what his policy is in respect of *(a)* full-time regular Service and *(b)* compulsory call-out when making provision for medium-sized operations of low intensity. [R] [147471]

Mr. Caplin: The reserve forces are an integral part of the United Kingdom's military capability for a wide variety of different types of operations. Many factors will determine the number of reservists required to support a particular operation and whether it is necessary to mobilise reservists compulsorily. These factors include: the size of the operation; other concurrent operations; the time available to set up and train a force before deployment; the expected length of a particular operation; the individual skills and trades required; and the pool of people available with the requisite qualifications.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Territorial Army, *(b)* Royal Naval Reserve and *(c)* RAF Reserve personnel remain available for mobilisation. [147725]

Mr. Caplin *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* As at 1 December 2003, the following Volunteer Reserve personnel were available for mobilisation:

Territorial Army: 28,400

Royal Navy Reserve: 2,670

Royal Marines Reserve: 750

Royal Auxiliary Air Force: 1,300.

These figures include untrained strengths (while untrained, they have a call-out liability), but exclude those who are currently mobilised, those serving on Full Time Reserve Service, Additional Duties Commitment and members of the Officer Training Corps.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been paid in *(a)* reservist standard award and *(b)* reservist hardship award to mobilised reservists in each of the last five years; and how many individuals were involved in each case. [R] [147260]

Mr. Caplin: The information requested is not centrally held and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes to reservist standard award are planned; and when they will be implemented. [R] [147261]

Mr. Caplin: The Defence White Paper made clear that work is in hand to produce new regulations governing the award of both Reservist Standard Award and Reservists Hardship Award. The new regulations will take into account the lessons arising from the mobilisation for Iraq. It is too early to state what the finalised proposals might be. However, once the MOD has completed our deliberations we plan to publish a consultation document to seek the views of interested parties prior to the issue of the final regulations.

Service Children's Education

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many children currently benefit from boarding school allowance; and what the cost of the scheme is in 2003–04. [147138]

Mr. Caplin: The cost of the scheme in each of the school terms in 2003 is as follows:

Term	*Number of children*	*Cost (£)*
Spring 2003 (January-March)	4,332	13,660,611.01
Summer 2003 (April-July)	4,406	13,655,127.27
Autumn 2003 (September-December)	4,277	14,744,626.76
Total cost		42,060,365.04

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the funding per pupil by Service Children's Education was in each of the last five years. [147140]

Mr. Caplin: The Agency's Annual Report and Accounts for the past five years contain details of the Annual Operating Costs of Service Children's Education (SCE) together with the pupil numbers served. Copies of these are available in the Library of the House.

It is not possible to provide the information in the format requested. The Quinquennial Review Team recognised that simple cost comparisons between Service Children's Education (SCE) and local education authorities in the United Kingdom cannot be made due to a number of factors. These include the differences in funding mechanisms between the two parent Departments, the accounting requirements placed on SCE as a Defence Agency, and most notably the additional costs incurred by the Agency brought about by operating in an overseas environment.

In addition to the Annual Reports, a series of cost calculations showing a number of different tabulations for pupil costs are contained at Annex E to the Quinquennial Report published in May 2003, a copy is which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the academic and education targets set for Service Children's Education schools in each of the last five years, and what assessment he has made of the extent to which these targets have been met or exceeded. [147141]

Mr. Caplin: In common with other Defence Agencies, Service Children's Education publishes its Annual Report and Accounts each year. The Agency's Key Targets and performance against them are contained within these documents, copies of which are held in the Library of the House. The Annual Report covering 2002–03 is scheduled for publication in January 2004.

Tornado

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the rear weapon suspension points on all the shoulder pylons fitted to RAF Tornado GR4 aircraft fully comply with Military Standard 1760; and if he will make a statement. [147549]

Mr. Ingram: Military Standard 1760 is specifically concerned with the location of electrical connector access points in relation to the weapon suspension points on the shoulder pylons. Due to space constraints the weapon electrical connector access points cannot be located at the position defined by Military Standard 1760 on the Tornado GR4. NATO Stanag 3558 does

however, provide the option to locate the electrical connector at either the Military Standard 1760 position or at a specified alternative location; it is this alternative that has been utilised on the Tornado GR4.

WALES

Government of Wales Act

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what functions have been transferred to the National Assembly for Wales pursuant to section 22 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 since 1998. [147047]

Mr. Hain: The functions are too numerous to list but they can be found in the following National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Orders:

1999 No.672: which made the initial transfer of the functions of the Secretary of State for Wales to the Assembly;

1999 No.2787: which transferred functions under the Water Industry Act 1999;

2000 No.253: which made amendments to the original 1999 Order;

2000 No.1830: which entitled the Assembly to be joined as a party in relevant Human Rights Act cases;

2001 No.3679: which relates to Intervention Board functions.

Procurement

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147580]

Mr. Hain: The Wales Office has not outsourced any jobs to offshore companies and has no plans to do so in the future.

Richard Commission Report

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the First Minister of the National Assembly for Wales on the forthcoming Richard Commission report. [141188]

Mr. Hain: The First Minister and I meet regularly and we have discussed the Richard Commission on a number of these occasions.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Live Music Forum

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the remit of the Government's taskforce The Live Music Forum; and whether it extends to Northern Ireland. [147573]

Estelle Morris: The Live Music Forum will work with the music industry and other key stakeholders to:

1. take forward the Ministerial commitment to maximise the take-up of reforms in the Licensing Act 2003 relating to the performance of live music;

2. promote the performance of live music generally;

3. monitor and evaluate the impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on the performance of live music; and

4. make recommendations for further action.

The Licensing Act 2003 applies to England and Wales. Therefore, the Live Music Forum's remit extends only to those countries.

Ofcom

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what the projected total annual salary bill of Ofcom is for its first year of operation; [145499]

(2) how many Ofcom employees will have an annual salary of £100,000 or over; [145500]

(3) how many people will be employed by Ofcom; [145501]

(4) what the estimated total cost is of setting up Ofcom; [145502]

(5) if she will estimate the *(a)* set-up and *(b)* annual running costs of the Ofcom buildings. [145503]

Estelle Morris: These are matters for the Office of Communications (Ofcom). DCMS officials have, therefore, asked the Chief Executive of Ofcom to respond directly to the hon. Member. Copies of the Chief Executive's letter will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agricultural Support

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the level of *(a)* Green Box support, *(b)* Amber Box support and *(c)* Blue Box support is from the UK Government to agriculture. [146645]

Alun Michael: The level of agricultural support, categorised by Green, Amber and Blue boxes, is notified to the World Trade Organisation for the European Union and is not separately identified by member state. The latest published notification of domestic support for the European Union is for the marketing year 1999–2000 and records the level of Green Box support as €19.9 billion; Amber Box €47.9 billion; and Blue Box €19.8 billion.

Climate Change

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will assess the implications for the United Kingdom of the article on climate change impacts in the United Kingdom and other countries over the next half century by Professor Chris Thomas of Leeds University, published in *Nature* in January. [147688]

Mr. Morley: The article in *Nature* indicated that about a quarter of the land species in the areas studied could be committed to extinction in 2050 under mid-range global climate warming scenarios. However the article did not provide a prediction for extinction rates in the UK.

The Department, along with the devolved Administrations, statutory nature conservation agencies and non-governmental organisations, is contributing to an ongoing research programme on the impacts of climate change on biodiversity in the UK. Results suggest that as climate changes, the distribution of species and the composition of habitats will change. With warmer temperatures, some northern species are likely to retreat, while southern species may be able to expand their ranges. Movement of some species may be strongly impeded by our highly fragmented landscapes, possibly leading to local extinctions.

The Department also plans to commission an update of its "Review of the impact of climate change on UK species and habitat conservation (2000)". The latter report is available on the internet www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/climatechange/nature/index.htm and will be placed in the Library of the House.

Departmental Relocation

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what assessment her Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire; and if she will make a statement; [146863]

(2) what assessment her Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in her Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if she will make a statement; [146892]

(3) what assessment she has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146879]

(4) what plans she has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in her Department to the regions; and if she will make a statement. [146923]

Alun Michael: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in how many speeches during 2003 she declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147303]

Alun Michael: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

European Definitions (Fruit and Vegetables)

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what guidance she will provide to fruit and vegetable retailers following the Law Lords' decision on the case against Asda relating to European Union definitions of fruit and vegetables. [146719]

Alun Michael: No new guidance is required. The Law Lords' decision does not affect either the EU marketing standards themselves or the existing obligations of fruit and vegetable retailers. Guidance is already available from Defra's Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate, who advise on and enforce the standards, and from the Defra website http://www.defra.gov.uk/hort/hmi.htm. Information on this site includes copies of the standards, contact details for inspectors and a retailers' guide.

Food Exporters

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what sums were made available to *(a)* UK and *(b)* EU companies for the restitution of funds to assist with exporting costs in each of the last three years. [147051]

Alun Michael: During the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 the Rural Payments Agency paid approximately £125.4 million, £138.7 million and £170.2 million respectively in export refunds to companies claiming in the United Kingdom.

For the whole of the European Union, payments made during 2000 and 2001 amounted to 5.6 billion euros and €3.4 billion respectively. The figure for 2003 is not yet available.

GM Rice

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what advice she has received from the Advisory Committee on Releases into the Environment on the proposal by Bayer to import GM rice into the EU for processing and animal feed. [148307]

Mr. Morley: The application by Bayer for the importation of herbicide tolerant rice (event LLRICE62) into the European Union is being considered under the procedures set out in Directive 2001/18/EC. The UK is the lead member state and therefore undertakes the initial assessment. The Government has been advised by ACRE that "This GM rice does not pose a risk to human health and the environment. The marketing of this product for importation and processing in the UK will be no different from that of other rice imported for processing and animal feed purposes. In coming to this conclusion ACRE have taken account of the advice of the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF). ACRE

also recommends that reports of post market monitoring for general surveillance of this product be provided to the regulatory authorities on an annual basis". The complete ACRE advice is available on the Defra website at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/regulation/euconsent.htm.

The application and the UK's assessment will now be assessed by other EU member states and the Commission before a collective decision is made. Consent, if granted, would not permit cultivation of the rice in the EU nor, without separate approval, could it be used in human food.

Horse Passport

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether a veterinary inspection and certification is necessary prior to the issue of a horse passport. [147945]

Alun Michael: No.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the horse passport regulations apply to the wild horses on Bodmin Moor. [147947]

Alun Michael: Yes.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to change the requirement for veterinary certification on horse passports. [147948]

Alun Michael: The silhouette on a passport must be signed by a veterinary surgeon or someone deemed competent to do so by the Passport Issuing Organisation. This is clearly the intention of the legislation but recently we became aware that some passport issuing organisations were allowing individual horse owners to complete and sign the silhouette. Independent verification is clearly essential. In underlining this point to the organisations I have proposed that the owner may complete the silhouette provided a microchip is inserted at the same time. This reflects our approach of working with the industry and seeking to be practical rather than gold plating the legislation.

Marine Stewardship Report

Mr. Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has made to introduce legislation to protect and manage the marine environment following the publication of the Marine Stewardship Report. [147538]

Mr. Morley: The Marine Stewardship Report announced a Review of Controls on Development in Marine and Coastal Waters. It also announced a Pilot project in the Irish Sea as the next step of the Review of Marine Nature Conservation. Both of these Reviews are examining whether new arrangements, including new legislation, are required to better manage and protect the marine environment. The Government will take a decision on whether new legislation is needed once it has seen the recommendations from these Reviews.

Single Farm Payment

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the Government's policy is on the single farm payment. [148308]

Alun Michael: We hope to make an announcement on the model for allocating entitlements under the new single payment scheme in a matter of weeks.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what research she has commissioned into illegal culling activity in TB hot spot areas. [148304]

Mr. Bradshaw: As part of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial, a proportion of setts within the survey only treatment areas are regularly checked for evidence of illegal activity, including badger digging and other signs of unauthorised culling or interference.

There is currently no Defra commissioned research on illegal culling outside of the badger culling trial areas.

CABINET OFFICE

E-Government Services

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what new proposals he has to extend e-Government services. [146494]

Mr. Alexander: 66 per cent. of Government services are now available on-line. Departments continue to make progress towards our target for making all services available electronically by 2005, with key services achieving high levels of take-up.

Later this year, we will pilot an enhanced customer offering for the delivery of electronic services designed around the needs of customers.

Leak Inquiries

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what inquiries his Department has conducted into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and on what occasions the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147010]

Mr. Alexander: Since 1997, my Department has investigated 10 suspected leaks.

In line with Exemptions 1*(a)* and 7*(b)* set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the long-standing practice of successive governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

Small Business Regulation

Brian Cotter: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will estimate the total savings for small businesses that would accrue from those measures listed in the Regulatory Reform Action Plan, which have yet to be implemented. [147606]

Mr. Alexander: The updated Regulatory Reform Action Plan (RRAP), which was published in December 2003, contained over 650 deregulatory measures, many of which will benefit small businesses. Examples of these are highlighted throughout the RRAP. Individual Regulatory Impact Assessments will be produced by the relevant Departments identifying benefits and savings from these measures as appropriate.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Afghanistan

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much money has been allocated by his Department to Afghanistan in each of the last three years; and how much has been pledged for *(a)* 2004–05 and *(b)* 2005–06. [148101]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: The table shows the allocations made to Afghanistan by the Department for International Development Afghanistan in each of the last three years and how much has been allocated for financial years 2004–05 and 2005–06.

£ million

	FY 01–02	*FY 02–03*	*FY 03–04*	*FY 04–05*	*FY 05–06*
DFID Afghanistan Programme	46	75. 5	55	55	60
Global Conflict Prevention Pool (joint DFID-FCO-MOD)		13	16.8	18	tba

We also provide about £40 million each year to Afghanistan through multilateral channels like the United Nations and EC.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of the financial assistance from his Department to Afghanistan in 2003–04 has been directed towards the long-term development of the country. [148582]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: DFID has allocated £55 million so far to Afghanistan this year, in addition to contributions to the joint FCO-DFID-MOD Global Conflict Prevention Pool and various multilateral organisations. £37.5 million of this has been disbursed to date. All of this financial assistance contributes to the long-term development of Afghanistan, including the £8 million we have provided in humanitarian assistance to support returning refugees, health and education.

Street Children

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many street children he estimates there are in each country of Asia. [148130]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: It is difficult to provide accurate data on the overall numbers of street children in Asia or to provide a breakdown by country. Estimates are unreliable and coverage is patchy. According to UNICEF there are roughly about 25 million children estimated to be living on the streets in Asia. However there is no reliable information for many Asian countries. In India the Ministry of Social Welfare estimates that there are between 75,000 and 250,000 street children in Calcutta alone. UNICEF estimate there are 15,000 street children in Vietnam and 16,000 in Sri Lanka.

The fundamental cause of children living on the street is poverty. This is exacerbated by chronic hunger, lack of school places and family conflict. Between 30 per cent. to 50 per cent. of children in South Asia are malnourished. Despite improvements in education provision around 41 per cent. of children drop out of school before they reach the fifth grade. Between 30 per cent. to 55 per cent. of school age children are working. Many of these children are exploited through child labour or are involved in the sex industry. Unless these problems are addressed the problems of street children in Asia will continue to grow.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much money has been provided by his Department in each of the last six years to tackle the problem of street children in Asia; what proportion of the money has been spent by whom; and with what results. [148131]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: Urban poverty, homelessness, lack of education and the demand for child labour forces children to leave their families and live on the streets in Asia. It is important that these underlying problems are addressed as well as helping street children directly. Our bilateral programmes in Asia aim to alleviate family poverty more generally as a basis for addressing the needs of street children.

Many of our programmes support NGO activities that advocate for the rights of children and work directly with street children. In Bangladesh we are supporting two NGOs to provide informal education to vulnerable working children in urban areas at a cost of £8 million. In Burma we have been supporting a street and working children project with World Vision at a total cost of £450,000. In India we are supporting a local NGO to work with child street vendors and have several other small projects in the pipeline focusing on vulnerable working children in urban areas.

We are providing £1.6 million to Save the Children to work directly with vulnerable children in the Mekong sub region. This project aims to prevent poor rural children being trafficked to urban areas in the region for purposes of sexual exploitation and under age employment. This helps to reduce the potential for these children to end up on the street.

Other DFID activities also contribute directly to addressing the problems of street children. Improving basic education for every child is the main contribution that Asian Governments can make to reducing child

poverty and indirectly to reducing the numbers of street children. Support to basic education is a major focus of our bilateral programme in Asia and in 2001–02 DFID committed £130 million to support this.

Another example is the £12 million urban poverty reduction project in Cochin in India that has helped to improve basic services for poor families and their children.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Provisional IRA

Mr. Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the remaining amounts of weaponry and ammunition held by the Provisional IRA. [147042]

Jane Kennedy: This information requested is only available from intelligence sources and in line with Part 2 of The Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it would be inappropriate for the Government to comment. The Government and the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning have consistently made clear that they will continue to pursue complete decommissioning by all paramilitary organisations to ensure that there is a permanent end to paramilitary activity in all its forms.

Crime Statistics (Coleraine)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total value of *(a)* house burglaries and *(b)* attacks on the person in the Coleraine borough in the last three years; and what additional resources have been made available to address this problem. [145103]

Jane Kennedy: The information is not fully available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The table sets out the number of domestic burglary and personal robbery offences within Coleraine District Council.

	Domestic burglaries	*Personal robberies*
2000–01	228	27
2001–02	405	28
2002–03	304	30

Depending on its nature, an 'attack on the person' can be recorded separately as a 'violent crime' (a category which also includes all offences against the person, sexual offences) or as an 'offence against the person' (this also includes assaults, intimidation and harassment offences), but a statistical breakdown could be established only at disproportionate cost.

It is not possible to establish the total value of property stolen or damaged, if any, as a result of these offences as there is no requirement for the police to keep a record of individuals' losses or the cost of repairs to properties.

The police in Coleraine are tackling this type of crime through a number of means including intelligence-led policing and the provision of a full-time analyst dedicated to providing crime pattern analysis and the identification of crime hotspots. Additionally, a local crime team has been initiated and is being supported by a technical support group in respect of specific operations and a property-marking scheme is due to be piloted this year in a particular crime hotspot within the district council area.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* house searches, *(b)* arrests and *(c)* convictions have taken place involving members of Loyalists paramilitary groups in the Coleraine borough in each year since 2000. [145104]

Jane Kennedy: To supply the information specifically with regard to Loyalist groups would incur a disproportionate cost. However, the following table provides details of the number of house searches carried out in the Coleraine borough since 2000. Authorisations were issued to search dwelling houses for munitions, transmitters, scanning receivers and wireless apparatus.

Financial year	*Number of house searches*
2000–01	22
2001–02	25
2002–03	4
2003–04 (to 30 September)	7

Helicopter Accident (Lough Foyle)

Mr. Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the results were of the investigation into the accident involving a military helicopter in Lough Foyle, County Londonderry on 19 July 2002. [147045]

Mr. Caplin: I have been asked to reply.

The Board of Inquiry into the accident is not yet complete. The investigation is expected to be completed later in the year and I will write to the hon. Member with the outcome and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Officers Superannuation Fund

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the current funding level of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Fund. [147533]

Angela Smith: The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee is required, by regulation, to obtain an actuarial valuation of the assets and liabilities of its pension fund every three years. The next actuarial valuation exercise takes place on 31 March 2004. Each quarter the Committee and the fund's actuary monitor the position and the Department of the Environment is advised accordingly, on a regular basis.

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the estimated additional cost of a rise in the current employer contribution rate to 11.9 per cent. for the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers'

Superannuation Fund would be to his Department's annual budget; and whether the spending plans for 2005–06 reflect such a possible increase. [147534]

Angela Smith: For all employing authorities contributing to the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Fund, the estimated cost of an increase from the current employer contribution rate of 4.6 per cent. to 11.9 per cent. would incur further contribution income amounting to £32,605,830 in one year. There are currently 209 employing authorities, including district councils, education and library boards, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Associations and certain schools and colleges, all of which would have to budget for any increase.

The rate of 11.9 per cent. is, however, at this stage, an indication of the potential required increase and the position will be determined when the actuarial valuation of the fund, as at 31 March 2004, is obtained by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee. It is anticipated that a stepped approach to increasing contribution rates would be adopted, over the period 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2007, The position would also be reassessed at the 31 March 2007 valuation. Efforts would be made to keep annual increases in the contribution rate within the range of 2 per cent. to 4 per cent. of pensionable payroll. 2005–06 spending plans do not, as yet, take account of any potential increase.

Paramilitary Beatings

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many paramilitary beatings were reported in each of the last six years. [146307]

Jane Kennedy: The information requested is outlined in the following table.

Number of casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults

	By Loyalist	*By Republican*	*Total*
1998	89	55	144
1999	90	44	134
2000	78	54	132
2001	93	53	146
2002	89	50	139
2003	102	46	148

Prison Service

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the *(a)* Director General and *(b)* Director of Operations of the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been provided with accommodation on the Stormont estate. [146174]

Jane Kennedy: Neither *(a)* the Director General nor *(b)* the Director of Operations of the Northern Ireland Prison Service has been provided with accommodation on the Stormont Estate.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the cost to public funds has been of providing accommodation in the Stormont Estate for the Director General and Director of Operations of the Northern Ireland Prison Service. [147219]

Jane Kennedy: It is standard practice for office accommodation for all civil servants to be arranged by their individual agency/department.

In the case of the Director General and Director of Operations of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, office accommodation in the Stormont Estate is provided through Northern Ireland Prison Service Headquarters at Dundonald House.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Buildings

Gregory Barker: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement on the rules regarding the use of party political advertising material in Government buildings; [148160]

(2) when the guidance on the use of Government buildings for party political purposes was last updated; [148058]

(3) what measures are taken by his officials to enforce the rules regulating the party political use of Government buildings; and how many times they have been breached since 1997. [148059]

The Prime Minister: Section 6 of the Ministerial Code, which was last revised in June 2001, provides guidance on the use of Government property for party political purposes. Section 3 of the Civil Service Code, which was last revised in May 1999, is also relevant and it is for each Department to enforce the rules. No central records on this are held.

Honours Committee

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister whether the source of the leaked minutes of the Honours Committee has been found; and if he will make a statement. [148399]

The Prime Minister: In order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements, it has been the practice of successive governments not to comment on the conduct and outcome of leak inquiries.

Special Advisers

Mr. Laws: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what the *(a)* number and *(b)* salary cost of special advisers was in each Department in each year from 1995–96 to 2002–03; and if he will make a statement; [147656]

(2) what the total salary cost for special advisers is estimated to be for 2003–04; and how many special advisers there are in each pay band, broken down by Department. [147657]

The Prime Minister: Since July 2002, I have published on an annual basis details of the number of special advisers by pay band and Department and their overall cost. Information for the financial years 2002–03 and 2003–04 is available in the Library of the House. The total salary cost for special advisers in 2003–04 will be published as soon as the information is available at the end of the financial year.

For information for the period 1995–96 to 2000–01, I refer the hon. Member to the answer the Minister for the Cabinet Office gave to him on 31 January 2003, *Official Report*, columns 1056–57W.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Access to Justice

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what assessment the Department has made of the extent to which *(a)* the closure of county magistrates courts and *(b)* the pressure on the Courts Service's outlying civil and family estate affect the distance people are required to travel to have access to justice in each region. [147673]

Mr. Leslie: The extra time and distance people are required to travel is always carefully considered when magistrates courts are closed. Other factors taken into consideration are workload, the facilities available and the costs of renovations which would be required to bring a court up to standard. All of these are assessed when I consider any appeal on a magistrates court closure.

The Court Service has been working with the Magistrates Courts Committees to look at the opportunities to share court accommodation to ease the pressure on the court estate and thereby improve access to justice.

Asylum

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Home Affairs on delivering an efficient asylum process. [146671]

Mr. Lammy: In the last 12 months the Lord Chancellor and then the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor has had eight separate meetings which were scheduled to discuss asylum and 15 separate meetings which were scheduled to discuss reform of the criminal justice system with the Home Secretary. They will also have discussed these issues in the context of other meetings.

The Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and Lord Chancellor and I work closely with the Secretary of State for Home Affairs on asylum issues and meet regularly.

Mr. Malins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many asylum appeals were considered by *(a)* the Court of Appeal and *(b)* the House of Lords in each of the past two years; and how many such appeals succeeded. [143359]

Mr. Lammy: During the two-year period between 1 December 2001 and 30 November 2003, the Court of Appeal Civil Division made decisions in 248 appeals which were classified as relating to Immigration and Asylum matters. Five of these appeals were brought by the Secretary of State.

Of these, 64 were allowed by the court, two of which were brought by the Secretary Of State.

These figures do not include applications for permission to appeal.

We have no information on how many asylum appeals are considered by the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs when he will reply to the letter to him dated 25 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Jahangir Shah. [147612]

Mr. Leslie: A reply to my right hon. Friend was signed by the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and Lord Chancellor and sent on Monday 12 January.

International Human Rights Instruments

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs when the Interdepartmental Review on International Human Rights Instruments was due to report to Ministers; when Ministers received this report; when the outcomes of this review will be made available; and if he will make a statement. [147446]

Mr. Lammy: The terms of reference for the review were that it should report in spring 2003. The very wide scope of the review, and the number of Departments involved, have caused the review to take longer than expected. We will announce its outcomes to Parliament as soon as is reasonably possible.

Legal Funding

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what discussions the Secretary of State has had with the Legal Services Commission on the funding of *(a)* human rights cases and *(b)* cases brought through legal aid against the closures of care homes for elderly people; and whether he was consulted by the Commission on the funding of such cases pursued by Hossacks Solicitors, of Kettering. [147464]

Mr. Lammy: Regular discussions take place between my Department and the Legal Services Commission about funding policy, of which human rights issues form an important part, given that cases which allege human rights violations by public bodies are a priority for Community Legal Service funding.

No discussions specifically concerning the funding of individual human rights cases, or publicly-funded cases against the closures of care homes for the elderly, have been held with Ministers. Nor have Ministers been consulted on the funding of such cases pursued by Hossacks Solicitors, as Ministers cannot intervene in individual funding applications.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Racial Hatred

24. **Dr. Evan Harris:** To ask the Solicitor-General what guidelines she has issued to the Crown Prosecution Service on the question of deciding what constitutes *(a)* prima facie evidence warranting and *(b)* a public interest supporting consideration of a prosecution for inciting racial hatred. [147846]

The Solicitor-General: The Code for Crown Prosecutors requires, as the hon. Member's question reflects, that in every case the prosecutor considers: *(a)* whether there is enough evidence to make it more likely than not that there will be a conviction and; *(b)* that the public interest supports a prosecution. There is a presumption under the code that it is in the public interest to prosecute racially aggravated offences in any case where there is a racial motivation against the victim.

Norman Baker: To ask the Solicitor-General what criteria are applied to decisions on whether prosecutions for alleged racial hatred are in the public interest. [147849]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service reviews all allegations of inciting racial hatred in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

All cases are considered individually on their own merits, but must meet both tests set out in the Code namely the evidential and public interest tests. When considering the public interest of such prosecutions, the Code for Crown Prosecutors specifically states that

> "a prosecution is likely to be needed if the offence was motivated by any form of discrimination against the victim's ethnic or national origin".

All such cases are dealt with by Casework Directorate at CPS Headquarters where a team of specialist prosecutors reviews them. The consent of the Attorney-General must be obtained before any such prosecution can take place.

Crown Prosecution Service

25. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will make a statement on the work of the Crown Prosecution Service with the Nottingham Criminal Justice Board in connecting the criminal justice system with local people. [147847]

The Solicitor-General: Ms Kate Carty, the Chief Crown Prosecutor for CPS Nottinghamshire, is an active member of the Local Criminal Justice Board, she chairs two important sub-groups: one on improving the service to vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses; the other on improving communications between the criminal justice agencies and the community. She also leads an initiative to ensure, through schools, that young people in Nottinghamshire are aware of the work and structure of their Local Criminal Justice Board.

26. **Mrs. Humble:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will make a statement on the role of the specialist prosecutors of street crime at the Crown Prosecution Service. [147848]

The Solicitor-General: In the 10 Street Crime Areas there are specialist prosecutors for prosecuting street crime cases (the premium service) in order to prosecute with the charge right first time and to help to secure the best evidence, reduce delays and focus resources.

The premium service has worked well in Lancashire and we have seen sustained improved performance, with significant decreases in the level of early terminations of cases.

Youth Justice

27. **Hugh Bayley:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will make a statement on her responsibilities in relation to *(a)* anti-social behaviour by youths and *(b)* youth justice matters. [147850]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is working with local authorities and other criminal justice agencies to ensure a strategic and effective response to anti-social behaviour by youths.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Correspondence

Chris Grayling: To ask the Minister for Women when she will reply to the letter sent to her Department on 21 July by the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell on behalf of Mavish Kentish of Laburnum Road, Epsom. [143199]

Jacqui Smith: In consultation with DWP and HMT officials it has been decided that Inheritance Tax falls within the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in transferring your letter. I have asked that a response be sent to you as a matter of urgency.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Child Support Agency

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many absent parents have subsequently been assessed for a change in circumstances by the Child Support Agency after failing to respond to a request for details of change of circumstances by post; [147472]

(2) what procedure is followed by the Child Support Agency to determine the accuracy of address information on absent parents when they receive no response to postal requests for information on change of circumstances; [147473]

(3) what recent discussions he has had with the Child Support Agency on procedures for contacting absent parents to ascertain changes in circumstances; [147474]

(4) how many requests to absent parents by the Child Support Agency for details of change of circumstances were sent by post in 2003; and how many were returned undelivered by the post office. [147475]

Mr. Pond: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the Chief Executive, Mr. Doug Smith. He will write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Letter from Doug Smith to Mr. Michael Weir:

In reply to your recent Parliamentary questions about the Child Support Agency the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Chief Executive.

You asked the following questions:

how many absent parents have subsequently been assessed for a change in circumstances by the Child Support Agency after failing to respond to a request for details of change of circumstances by post;

what procedure is followed by the Child Support Agency to determine the accuracy of address information on absent parents when they receive no response to postal requests for information on change of circumstances;

what recent discussions he has had with the Child Support Agency on procedures for contacting absent parents to ascertain changes in circumstances;

how many requests to absent parents by the Child Support Agency for details of change of circumstances were sent by post in 2003; and how many were returned undelivered by the post office.

The Agency does not collect information about volumes of post issued or returned undelivered. If we have not received a response to postal requests for information and all other avenues for obtaining it have been exhausted, the case is referred to the Agency Inspectors for a visit to obtain this information. The Secretary of State and the Chief Executive of the Agency meet regularly to discuss all aspects of Agency business.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Plaskitt: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many Child Support Agency cases are now operating on the new formula for calculation of maintenance payments; [147994]

(2) how many Child Support Agency cases continue to operate on the original formula for calculation of maintenance payments. [147995]

Mr. Pond: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the Chief Executive, Mr. Doug Smith. He will write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Letter from Doug Smith to Mr. James Plaskitt:

In reply to your recent Parliamentary questions about the Child Support Agency the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Chief Executive.

You asked the following questions:

how many CSA cases are now operating on the new formula for calculation of maintenance payments, and

how many CSA cases continue to operate on the original formula for calculation of maintenance payments.

Regular reports on the progress of child support reform are made to the House. The most recent of these covered the period to 30 September. As of September there were 30,528 cases operating on the new formula and 882,800 cases operating on the original formula.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Plaskitt: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) when he will begin the process of migrating existing cases to the new formula for calculation of maintenance payments; [147996]

(2) what criteria he will apply to the prioritisation of cases for migration to the new formula for calculation of maintenance payments; [147997]

(3) how long he expects the process of migration of cases to the new formula for calculation of maintenance payments to take. [147998]

Mr. Pond: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) on 18 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 1092W.

Plans for transferring the old scheme caseload to the new scheme have yet to be finalised.

Departmental Pay

Mr. Hopkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the cost is of the departmental pay bill increase for 2003–04. [147515]

Maria Eagle: Negotiations for the 2003–04 pay award are still ongoing. Subject to acceptance of the current pay offer, the in-year 2003–04 pay bill for the department will increase by around £120 million. This represents a percentage increase of 3.7 per cent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the letter to him dated 6 October 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. V. Ilyas. [147613]

Mr. Mullin: I apologise to my right hon. Friend for not having replied to his letter of 6 October 2003 to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

The Foreign Secretary will write to him shortly.

Eritrea

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia. [147527]

Mr. Mullin: Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea are tense. We are urging both parties to take forward the Algiers Agreement which ended the war, implement the final and binding Boundary Commission decision, and to engage in dialogue on all of the issues separating the two countries. I am visiting Eritrea and Ethiopia from 13–19 January 2004, and will press these points.

Gambia

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on *(a)* the arrest of Gambia's Information Minister, Yankuba Touray, by President Jammeh's

forces and *(b)* the series of arrests of senior governmental officials, civil servants and businessmen in the last seven weeks. [147677]

Mr. Mullin: The Gambia's Secretary of State for Information, Communication and Technology, Mr. Yankuba Touray, was relieved of his official duties on 16 December 2003. He was not arrested.

A number of other Government officials and businessmen have been arrested in recent weeks, largely in connection with alleged misappropriation or currency irregularities. Those concerned have been arrested, detained, charged or released in accordance with local law. The majority leader of the National Assembly has, separately, been held in custody since 26 December 2003 on matters relating to national security.

We are following these developments closely. We welcome the Gambian Government's determination to tackle corruption. We are encouraging them to continue to ensure full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Sudan

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the Sudan about the recent disturbances at Khartoum University. [148303]

Mr. Mullin: We discuss human rights issues on a regular basis with the Government of Sudan, both bilaterally and as part of the EU-Sudan dialogue. As we understand it, the recent disturbances at Khartoum University did not directly result in any arrests or detentions, and we therefore see no reason to raise the matter but we will keep the situation under review.

Zimbabwe

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the security situation in Zimbabwe in respect of British citizens travelling to Zimbabwe; and if he will make a statement. [147209]

Mr. Mullin: We keep the security situation in Zimbabwe under constant review. Our travel advice available on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website at: www.fco.gov.uk spells out the current situation and is regularly updated to reflect any developments which might affect the safety of British citizens travelling to Zimbabwe.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the England and Wales Cricket Board about the England cricket team's proposed tour of Zimbabwe in respect of players' and supporters' safety. [147210]

Mr. Mullin: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the England and Wales Cricket Board officials are in close contact. The FCO's advice to visitors to Zimbabwe regarding safety and security is on our website at: www.fco.gov.uk This advice is kept under constant review. The decision whether to tour Zimbabwe this year rests with the ECB.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the situation in Zimbabwe. [147211]

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the situation in Zimbabwe. [147525]

Mr. Mullin: The situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate. 5.5 million people need food aid. The economy continues to collapse; inflation is at 620 per cent. Political violence continues. The Government of Zimbabwe continue to restrict press freedoms. We have made clear our condemnation of the present situation. We will continue to help feed Zimbabwe's starving people and promote a return to democratic governance and the rule of law.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the United Kingdom's ambassador in Harare about the situation in Zimbabwe; and if he will make a statement. [147212]

Mr. Mullin: I receive regular reports on Zimbabwe from our ambassador in Harare. The situation remains grim. We will continue to do all we can to prevent Zimbabweans starving and to secure a return to democratic governance.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the Zimbabwean ambassador to discuss political reform in Zimbabwe. [147213]

Mr. Mullin: I have no plans to meet the Zimbabwean ambassador. We maintain diplomatic relations with Zimbabwe and Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have occasional contact with his staff. The Government of Zimbabwe are fully aware of our views on the need for a return to democratic governance and the rule of law in Zimbabwe.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Chairman of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Committee on Zimbabwe about encouraging democratic reform in the country. [147214]

Mr. Mullin: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met with the Prime Minister of Jamaica. Chair of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Committee on Zimbabwe, at CHOGM in December 2003. Commonwealth leaders agreed that Zimbabwe's suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth should be maintained, and asked President Obansanjo of Nigeria, and the Commonwealth Secretary General, to encourage and facilitate progress and the return of Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on the conditions for the re-admission of Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth; and if he will make a statement. [147215]

Mr. Mullin: The Zimbabwe Government withdrew Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth. Her re-admission would require a decision by consensus of the current

members. We expect all members of the Commonwealth to adhere to the Harare principles of democratic government, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on Mr. Robert Mugabe's continuing tenure of an honorary knighthood; and if he will take steps to strip him of the knighthood. [148256]

Mr Mullin: Mugabe's knighthood was conferred in 1994 under the previous Government. Its removal is not our immediate priority, although we are keeping the matter under review. Our present priorities for Zimbabwe are feeding the hungry and working with our international partners to bring about the restoration of good governance and the rule of law.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Broadband

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action the Department is taking to ensure that broadband is made available more widely to the rural community. [147915]

Mr. Timms: In England, the Broadband Aggregation Project will make sure that the £1 billion Government spend on broadband connectivity for the public sector between 2003 and 2006 will offer the best value for money and widen availability to surrounding communities.

DTI is working with the Devolved Administrations and Regional Development Agencies to extend the availability of broadband still further. We have given them £30 million for pilot schemes to extend the availability of broadband in areas not currently served by the market.

A joint DTI/Defra Rural Broadband Team has been set up specifically to address the issue of availability of broadband in rural areas. It is working to support local community action to secure affordable access to broadband, to ensure rural communities derive the maximum benefit from the deployment of broadband and promote rural access and take up of broadband. Promoting partnerships between the telecommunications industry, government agencies and community organizations, our aim is that every community in the country should have access to broadband by the end of next year.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Totnes dated 19 November 2003 enclosing one from Mr. Christopher Martin-Gathern of Buckfastleigh about identity fraud. [148057]

Ms Hewitt: My office has no record of receiving the letter from the hon. Member. However, I should point out that identity fraud is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Miners' Compensation

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether compensation payments to be made for eligible estate claims for former miners for *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger are being processed. [146112]

Nigel Griffiths: With regard to respiratory disease, the Department's priority is to settle claims from the eldest and sickest living miners and their widows. Estate claims are a lower priority and are being processed in accordance with the prioritisation process, agreed with the claimants' solicitors. They are processed when there are no higher priority claims to assess.

On vibration white finger (VWF) claims, where IRISC have received the necessary medical report and confirmation of the claimant's employment history, families of deceased miners are having their claims processed along with those from living miners.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when she expects the last compensation payments to be made for eligible estate claims for former miners for *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger; [146113]

(2) when she expects the last compensation payments to be made to *(a)* former miners and *(b)* widows of former miners for (i) chronic bronchitis and emphysema and (ii) vibration white finger. [146117]

Nigel Griffiths: It is very difficult to give such estimates for either scheme.

The Vibration White Finger (VWF) scheme has closed but claims can only be processed when all relevant documentation has been received from claimants. Estates claims are being processed alongside live claims where supporting documentation is available, we expect that the greater part of general damages claims will be made offers by the end of 2005. Compensation for services will extend beyond that.

The respiratory disease scheme is still open until 31 March 2004 and claims are currently coming in around 8,000 a week, of which around 5,000 are deceased claims (both widows and estates claims). The speed of processing claims will depend, among other things, on how quickly documentation is received from claimants after initial registration. Claims are processed in priority order, as agreed with miners' solicitors and estate claims come behind live individual claims.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the number of claims for *(a)* vibration white finger and *(b)* respiratory disease for (i) former miners, (ii) widows of former miners and (iii) other eligible estate claims for former miners in (A) the UK, (B) England, (C) Scotland and (D) Wales. [146114]

Nigel Griffiths: The Vibration White Finger (VWF) scheme is now closed.

The figures for VWF are:

	Live claims received (scheme closed 31 October 2002))	*Widows/estate claims received (scheme closed 31 January 2003)*
UK	150,183	19,361
England	122,236	14,899
Scotland	9,625	1,857
Wales	18,322	2,605

The respiratory disease scheme closes at the end of March 2004. It is difficult to make estimates of final numbers as claims are currently coming in at around 8,000 per week. Some 5,000 of which are deceased claims.

As of 21 December 2003 the figures for respiratory disease are:

	Live claims as of 21 December 2003	*Widows/estate claims as of 21 December 2003*
UK	179,775	200,033
England	139,008	119,248
Scotland	13,679	15,351
Wales	27,088	38,781

Figures are not separately available for estate claims received. The Department's claim handlers, IRISC, register claims from both widows and estates as deceased.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many chronic obstructive pulmonary disease compensation claims have been registered; broken down by coalfield area; how many live claimants there are; and how many *(a)* widows and *(b)* estates are claiming. [146115]

Nigel Griffiths: As of 21 December 2003 the figures are:

COPD	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*
Live claims	139,008	12,489	26,699
Deceased claims (widow/estate)	145,911	14,556	38,156

Regional statistics by coalfield area can be found on the Department's website—www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth. The registration figures for deceased cases are not split between widows and estates.

Nuclear Energy

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Operation of Euratom Safeguards in 2002, Com (2003) 764 Final, in respect of its application to United Kingdom nuclear facilities and materials. [147623]

Nigel Griffiths: An explanatory memorandum (16077/03) covering the Commission report on the operation of Euratom Safeguards during 2002 has been submitted to Parliament. In the report the Commission notes that its overall conclusion from activities during 2002 was that no evidence was found to suggest that nuclear materials were diverted from their intended uses. Nor was any evidence found to suggest non-compliance with provisions relating to particular safeguards provisions assumed by the Community under agreements concluded with third states. The report includes comments on a number of UK installations; these comments are generally positive. Discrepancies that arose at some UK reactors (Bradwell, Sizewell A and Wylfa) were followed-up and, after consultation with the operator involved, satisfactorily resolved. The Commission acknowledges that the operator had taken steps to correct the discrepancy and prevent its recurrence.

Oil-fired Appliances

Jane Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will put in place a system of compulsory registration for installers and maintainers of oil-fired domestic central heating similar to the CORGI scheme for installers and maintainers of domestic gas appliances. [143014]

Mr. Timms: I have no plans to do so.

Post Office Closures

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will urge the Post Office to re-examine the case of the closure of *(a)* Stock Road sub-post office, Billericay, Essex and *(b)* Barn Hall Post Office, Wickford, Essex, following the representations of the hon. Member for Billericay to the Post Office and Postwatch. [148145]

Mr. Timms: Following public consultation, final decisions on post office closure proposals under the urban reinvention programme are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd., in the light of advice from Postwatch and other consultation responses.

Regional Selective Assistance

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the grants to investment projects made under regional selective assistance in 2003–04, stating for each *(a)* the amount of the award, *(b)* the region, *(c)* the type of project and *(d)* the justification for the award; and what amounts were allocated in each year since 1997. [147795]

Jacqui Smith: For reasons of commercial confidentiality details of individual grants offered are generally only published once the first payment of grant has been made. Publication is limited to offers of £75,000 or more and details can be found in the January, April, July and October editions of Labour Market Tends.

Aggregate numbers of regions and sectors are published in the Industrial Development Act Annual Report, which is laid in Parliament about three months after the end of the reporting period.

Technology Transfer Agreements

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on technology transfer agreements. [147860]

Ms Hewitt: My Department promotes the transfer of technology between many organisations in the UK and between British and overseas organisations. Our aim is to improve the productivity and competitiveness of British businesses along the lines we have set out in the recent Innovation Report "Competing in the global economy: the innovation challenge".

Although my Department assists the process of technology transfer through business support products such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, the vast majority of technology transfer agreements are arranged privately. I welcome the considerable expansion of technology and knowledge transfer in the UK that has occurred in recent years, largely as a result of innovative programmes such as the Higher Education Innovation Fund, that have seeded the idea of spin-out firms or other exploitation of science and technology in the minds of our researchers and technologists in academia and business.

HEALTH

Audiology

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what improvements he expects choice in the NHS will have for deaf people *(a)* in arranging an appointment and *(b)* in communicating with their doctor. [147696]

Dr. Ladyman: "Building on the Best: Choice", Responsiveness and Equity in the NHS draws out the main themes that emerged from our recent consultation on what changes would do most to improve the experience of health care for patients, users and carers. Building on the Best confirms that the commitment in the NHS Plan for a national interpreting and translation service has been initiated by NHS Direct. The interpretation component will include a requirement to provide services for people who use British Sign Language. Over time, this contract will be available to help deaf people arrange appointments and communicate with their doctors.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information his Department collects in respect of waiting times for audiology services; [147751]

(2) which NHS trusts have entered into partnership agreements with private hearing aid dispensers for *(a)* 2003–04 and *(b)* 2004–05. [147752]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department does not collect centrally information about waiting times for non-consultant led specialities such as audiology, nor about contracts entered into by local services.

The national framework agreement awarded to David Ormerod Hearing Centres and Ultravox Holdings plc in October 2003 will provide a service to patients on the same basis as the national health service, which remains responsible for the patients' care. It has so far involved sites in Shrewsbury, Leeds, Bradford, Bath, Bournemouth and East Cheshire. This partnership agreement is now being rolled out nationally.

Cannabis Use (Schizophrenia)

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned into cannabis use and schizophrenia. [148275]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Department of Health-funded research completed last year recognised that, while a causative link between early cannabis use and later development of schizophrenia and depression is not conclusively proven, recent epidemiological research has shown a stronger association than was previously evident. Although we have not commissioned further specific research into cannabis and schizophrenia, the Department monitors research is this area and has a range of expert advisers to inform policy.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has taken to improve the understanding among health professionals of the symptoms and effects of carbon monoxide poisoning. [147460]

Miss Melanie Johnson: On 22 February 2002, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Professor Sir Liam Donaldson and the Chief Nursing Officer, Sarah Mullally, published an updated letter, "Carbon Monoxide: the forgotten Killer". The letter pulled together the most current information available on carbon monoxide and was forwarded to community nurses, midwives, health visitors and general practitioners, professionals who are most likely to be aware of patients' living conditions and so identify those at increased risk. This letter was originally published on 7 September 1998.

Similarly, the quarterly "CMO Update" has included several reminders to GPs on the importance of diagnosis of carbon monoxide poisoning since 1998. Officials also issued a video in March 2002, prepared for the Health and Safety Executive, to all GP surgeries. The video highlights the main symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, as well as advising GPs on how to diagnose possible cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Care Homes

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it is appropriate for an independent review panel to take into account, in making their decisions on health care funding for people living in care homes, *(a)* the job status of the carers and *(b)* the classification of the home in which the care is received. [147555]

Dr. Ladyman: Eligibility for fully funded national health service continuing care is decided upon the patient's needs. When considering eligibility for fully funded NHS continuing care, and during any reviews of such decisions, the job status of any carers should make no difference to the decision. The care the patient receives and the setting in which it is provided should be based entirely on the patient's needs.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the eligibility criteria of Essex Strategic Health Authority for health care funding for people living in residential care homes. [147556]

Dr. Ladyman: Establishing and reviewing eligibility criteria for national health service fully funded continuing care is a responsibility of the strategic health authority, which will have taken legal advice when establishing the criteria.

Chemical Regulation

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the forthcoming EU Chemical Regulation; and if he will make a statement. [147232]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department has been consulted on the Government Position Statement on the new European Union chemicals strategy that was published in December 2002 and on the Government's response to the European Commission's internet consultation on the workability of its draft proposal in June last year.

Officials from the Department continue to be involved in the cross-Government steering committee that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has established on this issue.

Colloidal Silver

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of colloidal silver as a treatment for MRSA and other hospital-acquired infections. [146718]

Miss Melanie Johnson: We are not aware of any peer-reviewed or clinical trial evidence that colloidal silver is an effective treatment for methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) or other hospital-acquired infections. Colloidal silver has antibacterial properties, but it is not used as an alternative to antibiotics because of its toxicity when taken internally.

Delayed Discharges

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what targets were set for delayed discharge of patients aged 75 years and over for each quarter in each year since 1997. [147305]

Dr. Ladyman: Performance targets for the delayed discharge of patients aged 75 years and over occupying an acute bed have been set on an annual basis, rather than a quarterly target, since 2000–01. Each of these targets was set out in the relevant year's Planning and Priorities Framework, published by the Department of Health.

These targets are shown in the table.

	Percentage
2000–01	11
2001–02	10
2002–03	9

There was no numerical target set for 2003–04; the NHS Plan target is to end "widespread bed blocking".

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many delayed discharges of patients aged 75 years and over there were in each quarter in each year since 1997. [147306]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is shown in the table and is also available in the Library.

Numbers of adult patients over 75 in acute beds with delayed discharge—quarterly figures 1997–2003

Quarter	*Number of patients*
September 2003	2,988
June 2003	3,100
March 2003	3,031
December 2002	3,502
September 2002	4,147
June 2002	[1]
March 2002	4,691
December 2001	5,117
September 2001	5,673
June 2001	5,396
March 2001	5,938
December 2000	5,801
September 2000	5,958
June 2000	5,538
March 2000	5,431
December 1999	5,419
September 1999	5,552
June 1999	5,276
March 1999	5,891
December 1998	5,772
September 1998	6,219
June 1998	6,180
March 1998	6,265
December 1997	6,451
September 1997	6,854

[1] No date

Note:
Reliable data was not available for over 75s for this quarter, because of structural changes resulting from Shifting the Balance of Power. The figure for all adults was 4,924.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146870]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146886]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146900]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible relocation of staff in the Department to his regions; and if he will make a statement. [146921]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Diabetes

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 310W, on diabetes, what bodies were specifically advised of the 2002 Diabetes Consultation Exercise; what the duration was of the exercise; how it was researched; how many responses the Department received; what its terms of reference were; how the replies were evaluated; and what steps were taken to publish the findings. [147743]

Ms Rosie Winterton: A general public consultation on the broad future research agenda for diabetes was undertaken to support the joint Department of Health and Medical Research Council review of current and future research in diabetes. The remit of the research advisory committee that conducted the review was to consider all research on diabetes in the United Kingdom in the international context, with a view to identifying opportunities for new research, options for strengthening research, and areas where research could support clinical practice, public health and the national service framework for diabetes.

Consultation was conducted mainly electronically and continued for three months. A total of 108 submissions were received and evaluated. The review was published in October 2002. A copy is available in the Library. Full details of the process of consultation and the results are set out in Annex 4 of the Review.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis the Department decided during the joint Department of Health and Medical Research Council's review in 2002 of current and future research on diabetes not to make a comparison of clinical outcomes, mortality and complications between the use of animal insulin and human insulin. [148049]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department of Health and the Medical Research Council's review of current and future research on diabetes identified the principal opportunities for research across the whole field from molecular biology to health services research, including clinical research. The complications of diabetes which give rise to morbidity and to premature mortality were the subject of particular consideration by the members of the advisory committee and of a specific sub-group. A major determinant of the development of these complications in Type 1 diabetes is the control of the blood glucose by self-injection of insulin. The review identified research into the most effective use of existing and new insulin's, better insulin delivery systems, and training in self-management as fundamental to good control in these patients. Much research is being done in these areas. The Committee members did not consider, nor was it suggested to them, that the minor differences in the effects on humans of insulin from different species might contribute to differential rates of development of the complications of diabetes.

Disease Screening

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that all *(a)* economic migrants, *(b)* asylum seekers and *(c)* those with work permits receive a health screen for (i) hepatitis B, (ii) hepatitis C, (iii) tuberculosis and (iv) HIV/AIDS before they are admitted to the United Kingdom; and what the current policy is. [144006]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 15 December 2003]:* The Cabinet Office is currently co-ordinating work between relevant Government Departments, including the Department of Health, to review imported infections and immigration. The review aims to establish the facts about the impact of immigration on public health and national health service expenditure, consider all relevant issues including health screening and propose solutions should action be required. It is on-going and no decisions have been taken yet.

Asylum seekers are offered health assessments and screening for tuberculosis (TB) at the Home Office induction centre in East Kent (and will be offered them at other induction centres as they are rolled out). Testing for HIV is offered as part of the health assessment on request or where medical history indicates they have been at risk. The aims of the health assessment are to identify the immediate healthcare needs of the asylum seeker and to protect public health. Imposing mandatory health screening on asylum seekers would breach their human rights and would be contrary to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

In relation to other migrants, long-standing policy is that any person subject to immigration control who either mentions health or medical treatment as a reason for coming to the United Kingdom, or appears unwell; or is seeking leave to enter the UK for six months or more and is at high risk of having been exposed to TB should be referred by the immigration officer to a medical inspector. These arrangements are governed by Schedule 2 of the Immigration Act 1971 and the Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules (HC 395).

Drugs Treatment

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the variance in criminal offending between patients using the Mapperley Hospital Formula of prescribing and National Treatment Agency for Substance Abuse-recommended methadone dosages and use. [147760]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* Departmental officials are aware of the Mapperley Hospital Formula and can confirm that this is fully in line with Department of Health and National Treatment Agency guidance. Drug treatment is one of a number of factors shown to impact on criminal offending. In reflecting current guidance, we would expect the Mapperley Hospital Formula to make a comparable contribution in other areas of the country.

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the Mapperley Hospital Formula for prescribing for drug addiction. [147761]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* The Mapperley Hospital Formula uses an option that drug specialists have shown to be effective over many years and is fully in line with Department of Health and National Treatment Agency guidance.

Emergency Readmissions

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what targets were set for 28-day emergency re-admissions of people aged 75 and over in each quarter since 1997. [147307]

Dr. Ladyman: The target for emergency re-admissions within 28 days of discharge has always been to retain zero growth in the rate, year on year. Up to 2001–02, the target related to emergency re-admissions for those aged over 75 only. Since then, the target has related to patients of all ages.

Ethnicity

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of a person's ethnicity on their access to public services within the responsibilities of his Department. [143577]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department is committed to transforming the health and social care system so that it produces faster, fairer services with equity of access for all.

The most extensive survey on the health of minority ethnic groups ever carried out in England was published in February 2001. The 1999 "Health Survey for England" identified significant health inequalities among people from black and minority ethnic communities and found higher rates of general practitioner consultations for minority ethnic groups.

The Department recognises that, as the frequent gateway to other national health service services, access to general practice services for all populations is of primary importance. The 2002 NHS Patient's Survey, based on a sample obtained from the electoral register and with 145,000 responses, found that at least 99 per cent. of people from each ethnic group were registered with a GP.

Since 2003, these surveys have been carried out by individual NHS organisations but are collated and analysed at the national level by the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI).

Equality of access is also central to the Department's policy on social services and the Personal Social Services Performance Assessment Framework indicators provide statistical overview of social services performance in key areas including fair access.

The Department has made a commitment to the collection of ethnic origin information using the 2001 Census categories and has guidance in place to ensure that consideration of the collection of relevant race equality information is part of the process of establishing all new central data sets.

The creation of more equal access for black and minority ethnic people is an integral and vital aspect of the Department's programme of investment and reform. "Building on the Best, Choice Responsiveness and Equity in the NHS", December 2003, aims to promote equality of access to health care for all and sets the challenge of providing high quality, accessible services that meet the individual needs of an increasingly diverse population while also being underpinned by the values of fairness and equity. Copies are available in the Library.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147297]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 516–17W.

Health Promotion England

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* budget allocation and *(b)* actual spending of Health Promotion England for each year since 2000. [144786]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The budget allocation and actual spend for Health Promotion England for each year since 2000 is shown in the table.

£ million

	Budget	*Actual spend*
2000–01	5.683	5.232
2001–02	6.265	6.061

Health Services (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much earmarked funding has been provided to *(a)* Lancashire county council and *(b)* district councils in Lancashire for (i) older people's services and (ii) adults with learning disabilities in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [147855]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Department does not provide earmarked funds to county councils for services for older people or for adults with learning disabilities. Lancashire county council decides how much to make available for these services from the overall amount provided for adult services by the Department. Lancashire county council will receive a £14 million, or 7.4 per cent., increase for adult personal social services in 2004–05.

Hospital-acquired Infections

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the extra bed days caused by extended stays in UK hospitals due to hospital acquired infections in each of the last six years, broken down by hospital trust. [144147]

Miss Melanie Johnson: These data are not available, but a 1994–95 study[1] suggested that patients who acquire an infection in hospital remain in hospital on average an extra 11 days.

[1] The Socio-economic Burden of Hospital Acquired Infection—Public Health Laboratory Service, 1999, also available at: www.doh.gov.uk/haicosts.htm

Influenza Vaccine

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the take-up rates for influenza vaccine were as at 1 December 2003 *(a)* in England and *(b)* broken down by (i) primary care trust and (ii) strategic health authority. [147184]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The overall uptake of flu vaccine in England in those aged 65 and over as at 1 December 2003 was 67.9 per cent.. A breakdown by strategic health authority and primary care trust has been placed in the Library.

Landfill Sites

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been carried out into the incidence of birth defects within the proximity of landfill sites. [147233]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* I refer the hon. Member to the response I gave him on 14 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 798W.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on adult mental health services in each year since 1997–98; what the projected expenditure is in financial year 2003–04; if he will provide the figures in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* Retail Price Index-adjusted terms using 1997–98 as a baseline; and if he will make a statement on the method used for compiling the figures. [143715]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The table sets out the mental health services expenditure on patients aged 16 or over since 1997–98.

£ million

	Expenditure	*RPI-adjusted expenditure*
1997–98	2,849	2,849
1998–99	3,011	2,894
1999–2000	3,188	3,016
2000–01	3,729	3,427
2001–02	4,006	3,617

It is not possible to estimate the expenditure for mental health services for 2002–03 and 2003–04 until the national health service accounts for these years are finalised, at the end of January 2004 and 2005 respectively.

The figures are taken from the Expenditure Per Head of Population (EPHoP) analysis of healthcare spend. EPHoP measures activity from in-patients, out-patients and community based patients against expenditure taken from the hospital and community health service programme budget. The programme budget is compiled using NHS accounts—a combination of finance returns from strategic health authorities, NHS trusts, primary care trusts and the strategic health authority summarisation schedules.

Activity data from a range of sources, for example hospital episode statistics, Körner community returns, the Living in Britain survey, etc. are used to distribute the expenditure figures for each sector—mental health, acute services, etc. proportionally across the whole population.

Using the combination of expenditure and activity figures, the treatment cost is for each person within each age group and for each type of activity is calculated.

Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were waiting for in-patient treatment in the Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust area at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many people have been waiting over 12 months for in-patient treatment. [147989]

Dr. Ladyman: As of 31 October 2003, 8,040 patients were waiting for elective in-patient admission, and no patients were waiting over 12 months. The source of this data is the Department of Health monthly monitoring.

Patients Forums

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 203–04W, on patients forums, how many applications were made for membership of each patients forum; and how many members each has. [147951]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Information on applications received for each patients forum is not available because some applicants expressed multiple preferences or no preference for a particular forum. The total number of applicants at 9 January, the latest figures, was 5,776. At the same date, 549 of the 572 forums had seven or more volunteers.

Prostate Cancer

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures his Department is taking with *(a)* the NHS and *(b)* voluntary organisations to tackle prostate cancer. [147461]

Miss Melanie Johnson: In September 2000, the Government published the national health service prostate cancer programme, which set out what was known about prostate cancer and established a framework for future action. Good progress has been made on prostate cancer since the programme was published.

Over 98 per cent. of patients with suspected urological cancers, including prostate, were seen for their first outpatient appointment within two weeks of their general practitioner referral between July and September 2003.

There has been a 38 per cent. increase in the number of consultant urologists since 1997; from 343 to 473.

We have increased funding for research into prostate cancer twenty-fold since 1999–2000, which means in 2003–04, the Department is directly funding £4.2 million of research into prostate cancer.

We have provided Section 64 funding to the Prostate Cancer Charity to increase public awareness of prostate cancer, and funded the Database of Individual Patient Experiences in prostate cancer.

In the summer of 2001, we launched the prostate cancer risk management programme. This programme was established to ensure that men who are considering a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test for prostate cancer are given information concerning the benefits, limitations and risks associated with receiving a test. As part of this programme, an evidence based pack of materials has been sent to all general practitioners in England to help them counsel men in making an informed choice about the PSA test.

Much has been achieved on prostate cancer but we recognise that there is still much to be done. That is why we welcomed the launch of the Prostate Cancer Charter for Action on 29 January 2003 and set up the Prostate Cancer Advisory Group (PCAG) to ensure better collaboration and communication between the charter members and Government. PCAG is already working hard and is taking forward work on information for prostate cancer patients, public awareness, prostate cancer treatment and a national prostate cancer resource website.

Residential Care

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research he has commissioned on the need for more residential care places for people below pensionable age. [147216]

Dr. Ladyman: It is up to local councils to determine the range of care options, including residential care places for people below pensionable age, that are needed locally. This information should then inform their commissioning strategies and decisions.

The vast majority of people prefer to receive care at home rather than enter residential care.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many residential care homes cater for people only below pensionable age; and how many places this represents in total. [147217]

Dr. Ladyman: The number of residential care homes catering primarily for 18 to 64-year-olds in 2001 was 11,400 and the number of places was 81,100. This represents 24 per cent. of all places in residential care homes.

Figures for later years have been collected by the National Care Standards Commission, but comparable details are not available.

Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in departmental agencies in the last 12 months. [147906]

Ms Rosie Winterton: I refer the hon. Member to the response I gave to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Burstow) on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 622W.

Staff Costs

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list salaries and wages costs for *(a)* general and senior managers, *(b)* nurses and midwives and *(c)* administrative and clerical staff for (i) 2002–03 and (ii) 2003–04, broken down by NHS trust. [146053]

Mr. Hutton: Provisional information for 2002–03, which remains subject to standard checks, has been placed in the Library.

Information for 2003–04 will not be available until after the financial year has ended.

Voluntary Euthanasia Society

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times the Government have consulted the Voluntary Euthanasia Society on end of life decision making since 1997, and on what issues. [146480]

Ms Rosie Winterton: We are not aware of any formal consultation with the Voluntary Euthanasia Society regarding end of life decision-making since 1997. The Government have been in dialogue with a range of groups, including the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, particularly during the preparation of a series of leaflets on making decisions on behalf of mentally incapacitated adults and continue to listen carefully to arguments put forward by all sides.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Dredging

Norman Lamb: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much income has been raised by the Crown Estates from dredging licences issued in respect of *(a)* all dredging offshore and *(b)* dredging of sites off the Norfolk coast, broken down by individual dredging licence, in (i) 2002 and (ii) 2003; and if he will make a statement. [147546]

Keith Hill: While my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister is responsible for determining the environmental consents which are needed to support marine dredging licences issued by the Crown Estate, he has no responsibility for the Crown Estate itself or for its royalty revenues from marine minerals dredging.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 30 October 2003, *Official Report*, column 334W, which included information from the Crown Estate that stated that its royalty income for 2002 from marine minerals dredging off the Norfolk coast was £5.29 million. The Crown Estate has now informed me that its total royalty income for 2002 from all offshore marine minerals dredging was £13.02 million. Comparable figures for 2003 are not yet available. The Crown Estate has also advised me that its policy is to release financial details of individual licences or leases only with the agreement of the companies involved because the information can be commercially sensitive.

Information about marine dredging licences and licensees can be obtained from the Crown Estate website at www.crownestate.co.uk

Failed House Sales

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister by what percentage he estimates the number of failed

housing market transactions will fall as a consequence of the proposed introduction of homebuyers packs. [148302]

Yvette Cooper: Research carried out on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has indicated that under the present home buying and selling process 28 per cent. of transactions fail after terms have been agreed, and that this costs consumers some £350 million each year in wasted expenditure.

It is not possible to estimate accurately at this time by how much this failure rate will reduce following the introduction of home information packs. In evidence to the Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee an estate agent who has operated home information packs since 1996 said that in her agency the failure rate where homes are marketed with a pack is 3 per cent. compared to 26 per cent. where homes are marketed without a pack.

This reduction is due to information that could threaten or delay the transaction (e.g. a survey that both seller and buyer can rely on) being made available at the beginning of the process.

Firefighters

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what estimate he has made of the job losses in *(a)* Suffolk and *(b)* East Anglia which will result from the regionalisation of the Fire Service; [146522]

(2) what reduction in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire Service in East Anglia; [146523]

(3) what *(a)* operational benefits and *(b)* other advantages to the people of East Suffolk he expects to accrue from his plans to regionalise the Fire Service; [146525]

(4) what financial benefits to *(a)* the Treasury, *(b)* Suffolk county council, *(c)* taxpayers and *(d)* council taxpayers in Suffolk he expects to accrue from his plans to regionalise the Fire Service; [146526]

(5) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Suffolk on his plans to regionalise the Fire Service; and what their advice was; [146527]

(6) what community consultation he has held in Suffolk on his plans to regionalise the Fire Service; [146528]

(7) what discussions he has had with the Suffolk Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire Service; [146531]

(8) what discussions he has had with Suffolk county council on his plans to regionalise the Fire Service; [146532]

(9) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Suffolk's Fire Service. [146533]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government are not proposing to regionalise the fire and rescue service in the East of England. Suffolk county council will continue to be responsible for the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. The White Paper (Cm 5808) made clear that only where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly will there be a change to the democratic accountability of the service.

The Government's overriding objective is to save lives by doing more to prevent fires occurring in the first place. The White Paper also set out the government's expectation that existing fire authorities, including those in the East of England, would develop robust regional management arrangements to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level. Under these arrangements staff numbers in the East of England will continue to be a matter for the individual Fire and Rescue Authority employers concerned.

Operationally, the benefits of the regional approach will be improved resilience to terrorism and to major incidents such as flooding, integrated modern control rooms with the latest technology and improved specialist fire investigation.

Financially, procurement, training and human resource functions will all benefit from standardisation and pooling of resources and expertise. It is not possible to provide a meaningful breakdown of the respective benefits these savings will bring to central Government, individual citizens and localities, but all will benefit from a reduction in the £6.63 billion annual cost of fire to the economy in England and Wales.

The Government are currently consulting on their draft National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service. Those to whom the document has been sent include the Chairs of individual Fire Authorities, the Local Government Association and a wide range of bodies representing both retained and full time staff. Police authorities have not been specifically consulted, but comments from all stakeholders are invited by 12 March 2004.

In addition, all aspects of fire modernisation are discussed when we meet interested parties from time-to-time in the course of our Ministerial duties. The Chief Fire Officer for Suffolk attended the Fire and Rescue Service seminar on 3 December 2003 addressed by the right hon. Nick Raynsford MP and Phil Hope MP, and officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister expect to visit the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service shortly.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire Service without the consent of Suffolk county council. [146524]

Mr. Raynsford: It is expected that the voluntary arrangements proposed in the White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" will succeed. However, the Fire and Rescue Services Bill will strengthen and streamline the existing power in Section 6 of the Fire Services Act 1947 to combine Fire and Rescue Authorities, after consultation with the existing authorities and other persons affected.

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what evidence he has received to support his proposal that the fire station in Orford would provide a swifter and more efficient service if controlled by the same centralised system as Rickmansworth; [146529]

(2) what research relating to East Anglia he has commissioned to provide factual backing for his plans to regionalise the Fire Service. [146530]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government's conclusions about the benefits of a regional approach are set out in the White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808), and are informed by, a number of reviews of the service, culminating in the report of the Independent Review of the Fire Service published in December 2002. These reports are listed in the White Paper.

The Mott MacDonald report on the "Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales", published in December 2003, concluded that the optimum solution to secure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of fire and rescue service control rooms would be nine control rooms in England one matched to the areas of the Government Offices for the Regions. The Government accepts the conclusions of the Mott MacDonald report, and is consulting on implementation. Copies of the report and a related one by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate are available in the Library of the House.

A recent report by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate concluded that local purchasing arrangements based on individual preferences are not the most efficient means of obtaining goods, services and equipment. I am placing copies in the Library. These documents, while not specific to East Anglia, are applicable to the area.

Home Improvement Agencies

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress has been made on national coverage of home improvement agencies (HIAs); how this progress measures against the Government's targets for HIAs; and if he will make a statement. [148238]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has invited Supporting People administering authorities to bid for a proportion of the extra £2 million being made available from 1 April 2004 to restructure and to expand the Sector's current geographical coverage. Bids must be submitted to Foundations, the National Co-ordinating Body for Home Improvement Agencies, by 31 January 2004.

Mobile Phone Masts

Keith Vaz: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he last met representatives of the mobile phone industry to discuss siting of phone masts. [148208]

Keith Hill: I have not held any meetings with representatives of the mobile phone industry to discuss siting of phone masts. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) will be meeting representatives of the Mobile Operators' Association and the five commercial network operators on 19 January.

Somerset County Council

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much funding was provided to Somerset County Council in *(a)* 2001–02, *(b)* 2002–03 and *(c)* 2003–04. [145764]

Mr. Raynsford: The table gives details of revenue grants received by Somerset County Council as part of gross Aggregate External Finance (AEF) between 2001–02 to 2003–04.

£000

	2001–02	*2002–03*	*2003–04*
Revenue Support Grant	117,071	112,197	140,412
National Non-Domestic Rates	120,178	131,815	133,669
Specific Grants within AEF[1]	48,090	45,981	64,472
Total Central Government Support	285,339	289,993	338,553

[1] Information on specific grants up until 2002–03 is taken from local authority outturn returns. For 2003–04, where outturn information is not yet available this is based on local authority budget returns.

Note:
The grants are on an unadjusted basis and may not be comparable between years, because transfers of function may have taken place.

TREASURY

Child Trust Funds

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures his Department has taken to prevent investment companies offering child trust funds from offering reduced services to customers who do not invest the maximum sum permitted. [148666]

Ruth Kelly: Providers who want to offer child trust fund accounts will need to be approved by the Inland Revenue and will have to satisfy various conditions. All Child Trust Fund providers will be required to offer a stakeholder account. This will mean that a simple, low cost, accessible and risk-controlled account will be available for all. Full details of this and other conditions, such as the requirement for all children to receive annual statements, will be set out in the child trust fund regulations. We will publish draft regulations during the passage of the Child Trust Funds Bill, which is currently going through Parliament.

Ethical Financial Policies

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance the Treasury offers local authorities in developing *(a)* ethical and *(b)* environmental (i) investment, (ii) banking and (iii) procurement policies. [145715]

Ruth Kelly: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), together with other Government Departments, offers assistance to local authorities in relation to these matters.

The standards of ethical conduct expected from members of local authorities in all areas are laid down in a model code issued by ODPM in November 2001.

Local authorities have wide discretion to determine policies on investment and banking. New guidelines on prudent investment practice will come into effect from 1 April 2004. These guidelines enable ethical and environmental considerations to be fully taken into account by local authorities.

Guidance on Sustainable Procurement has been issued by The Office of Government Commerce and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Gift Aid

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the withdrawal of Gift Aid from charitable membership; [147150]

(2) how much he expects to raise from withdrawing Gift Aid from charitable membership; [147153]

(3) what assessment he has made of whether charities are likely to close as a result of the withdrawal of Gift Aid from charitable membership; [147267]

(4) what timescale he envisages for the withdrawal of Gift Aid from charitable membership; [147151]

(5) what assessment he has made of the cost to charities of the withdrawal of Gift Aid from charitable membership. [147152]

John Healey *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Gift Aid is designed to promote giving to charity by individuals. It has delivered significant benefits to all fundraising charities. Donations to charities using Gift Aid are subject to rules governing the level of benefit that a donor can receive from the charity in return for a gift. If a gift exceeds these limits then Gift Aid cannot be claimed on the gift. However, under a special exemption introduced in 1989 and imported into Gift Aid as part of a wider reform in 2000, certain heritage and conservation charities are able to claim Gift Aid on membership subscriptions in the same way as they were previously able to claim tax refunds under Deeds of Covenant. Deeds of Covenant lasted for at least three years, meaning that a donor was required to have an ongoing commitment to a charity, but Gift Aid can apply to one-off donations as well.

A number of charities eligible for the special exemption are claiming Gift Aid tax refunds under so-called 'day membership' schemes. These schemes do not generate additional giving, but simply reclassify admission fees as donations on which Gift Aid is being claimed.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the pre-Budget report (Cm 6042) that the Government will amend the Gift Aid legislation to ensure that the special exemption applies as it was originally intended and not to these 'day memberships'.

This will mean that heritage and conservation charities will continue to benefit from the special exemption where a donor has an ongoing commitment to the charity, such as an annual membership, and these charities—like other fundraising charities—will continue to benefit from Gift Aid on other donations of money.

No estimate is available of the amount of money being claimed by charities which are taking advantage of this. Charities are not required to differentiate on their Gift Aid claims the amounts they are claiming for 'day membership' income from other amounts they are claiming. However, the purpose of this measure is not to raise revenue but to maintain a level playing field for all charities. It is unfair that some charities are claiming Gift Aid payments on what is in effect an admission fee when most other charities cannot.

We will work closely with those charities affected to ensure that the change operates as intended and that the impact on them is minimised. The Government intend to announce final details of the changes in this year's Budget and introduce legislation in the next Finance Bill.

Iraq

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had *(a)* as part of the Paris Club, *(b)* with Gulf states and *(c)* with other states regarding the cancellation, reduction and rescheduling of Iraq's sovereign debt. [147530]

John Healey: The UK believes that Iraq's external debt is unsustainable and that creditors will need to agree a significant reduction through a clear multilateral process in order to restore Iraq to sustainability. This is likely to lead to the writing off the vast majority of Iraq's external debt. The UK would like to see this agreed by creditors before the end of 2004.

The UK welcomed the success of the US Presidential Envoy, James A. Baker III, in creating a G7 consensus on the need for substantial debt reduction for Iraq in the Paris Club during 2004.

The UK frequently discusses Iraq's debt problems with international partners and with international financial institutions, including discussions in the Paris Club, with the aim of broadening and deepening the emerging international consensus.

Public Sector Pensions

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the level of the Government's public sector pensions liability. [148317]

Ruth Kelly: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 14 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 816W.

Tax Credits

Mr. Webb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the letter of 2 December 2003 from the Paymaster General to the hon. Member for Northavon, on tax credits compensation, how many claims for compensation were submitted to the Inland Revenue up to the end of September 2003; and what the *(a)* minimum and *(b)* maximum compensation payments were that were made. [147991]

Dawn Primarolo: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Sir Archy Kirkwood) and the hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on 19 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 1100W.

Tax Returns (Self-Assessment)

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the investigation by the Inland Revenue and the e-Envoy into the breaches of confidentiality relating to self-assessment tax returns filed via the internet. [147634]

Dawn Primarolo: SA Online, the Inland Revenue tax return software was temporarily withdrawn on 27 May 2002 following reports from some customers that they had seen information relating to another person. The actual internet service for self assessment remained available to users of alternative tax return software.

The Inland Revenue acted quickly to safeguard taxpayer information. They immediately withdrew the service and called in Qinetiq, an independent security company, as well as experts from the e-Envoy's office.

After an extensive investigation Qinetiq and the experts from the Office of e-Envoy agreed that the Inland Revenue had

identified the root cause of the problem; and

implemented the necessary changes to ensure it does not occur again.

There has been no repeat of this incident.

Key findings were shared with the Office of E-envoy and other Government Departments.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the studies by the Inland Revenue into introducing new methods of payment of self-assessment liabilities. [147635]

Dawn Primarolo: IR is currently carrying out studies aimed at expanding the payment methods that are already on offer.

Direct Debit—For customers who are interested in making regular payments on account in advance of their SA tax becoming due IR offers a limited service called Budget Payment Plan. A current study is looking to develop a national service that will extend the use of the Inland Revenue's Direct Debit systems.

Debit card—A current study is looking at the feasibility of providing a National system to enable all IR Local Recovery Offices to accept Debit card payments.

Credit cards—Work on payment by credit card is on-going but there are many factors to consider before offering the facility to pay self-assessment debts by Credit card.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current delays in processing self-assessment tax returns received by the Inland Revenue. [147636]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue have met their targets for capturing the information included in self-assessment tax returns every year since self assessment was introduced and fully expect to do so again this year.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of taxpayers filed their self-assessment tax returns by the due date in 2003; and if he will make a statement. [147645]

Dawn Primarolo: 90.5 per cent. of self-assessment taxpayers filed their 2001–02 self assessment tax returns by the due date (31 January 2003).

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will change the inquiry window regarding self-assessment tax returns from running for 12 months from 31 January to 12 months from the date a return is received; and if he will make a statement. [147646]

Dawn Primarolo: There are no plans to change the self-assessment inquiry window to run for 12 months from the date a return is received.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many self-assessment tax returns have remained outstanding from each year since the system was introduced; and if he will make a statement. [147647]

Dawn Primarolo: Out of approximately nine million self-assessment returns issued annually, the number outstanding for each tax year as at the end of November 2003 was as shown in the following table:

Return year	*Returns outstanding*
1997	36,065
1998	55,357
1999	83,954
2000	136,984
2001	219,088
2002	389,939

Norman Lamb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers have filed their self-assessment tax returns via the internet in each year since this service became available; whether he expects that the 50 per cent. target for internet filing of self-assessment tax returns will be met by 2005; and if he will make a statement. [147648]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue received the following number of returns electronically in the following years:

2000–01: The number of returns received electronically by the Inland Revenue was 336,127. 296,837 of these were received via the Electronic Lodgement Service and 39,290 via the Internet Service.

2001–02: The number of returns received electronically by the Inland Revenue was 419,236. 343,009 of these were received via the Electronic Lodgement Service and 76,287 via the internet service.

2002–03: The number of tax returns received electronically by the Inland Revenue was 705,690. 370,051 of these were received via the Electronic Lodgement Service and 335,639 via the Internet service.

2003–04: The number of tax returns received electronically by the Inland Revenue at 9 January 2004 was 649,338. 209,515 of these were received via the Electronic Lodgement Service and 439,823 via the Internet service.

The target for electronic filing of self-assessment tax returns is that 25 per cent. of all self-assessment returns will be received electronically by 5 April 2006. Electronically means by the Internet service or the Electronic Lodgement Service. The Inland Revenue is on course to meet this target.

Taxation Adjustments

Mr. Gray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the value was of adjustments in favour of taxpayers resulting from compliance cases processed by the Large Business Office of Inland Revenue in each year since 1997–98; and in which years these sums were included in the Large Business Office's total compliance performance reported in Inland Revenue annual reports. [147949]

Dawn Primarolo: The figures for the value of adjustments in favour of taxpayers as a result of LBO inquiries are:

	£ million
1999–2000	132
2000–01	75
2001–02	130
2002–03	209

Data to provide this analysis is not available for earlier years.

The amounts for 1999–2000 to 2001–02 were included in the total given for the effect of LBO interventions for those years. For 2002–03 only the amount for revenue favour adjustments was shown.

Adjustments are recorded for the year in which they are settled.

UK Company Profitability

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of total UK company turnover has been spent on *(a)* company taxation, *(b)* national insurance contributions and *(c)* corporation tax in each of the last 10 years. [148182]

Dawn Primarolo: It is not possible from the tax records available centrally to provide the information requested.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the productivity of UK companies with *(a)* 1–49, *(b)* 50–99, *(c)* 100–249, *(d)* 250–499, *(e)* 500–999 and *(f)* more than 1,000 employees has been in each quarter since 1997. [148178]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Mr. Stephen O'Brien, dated 15 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question on the productivity of UK companies. I am replying in his absence. (148178)

The Office for National Statistics does not produce quarterly (or annual) estimates of productivity by size band of number of employees. Existing quarterly surveys are not suitable for producing output series by size band. They have a relatively small sample and do not include the very smallest companies (1–9 employees) and include very few with fewer than 50 employees in order to limit the statistical reporting burden on business.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animal Experiments

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many animals have been used in scientific procedures in each of the last 10 years; and what action he is taking to reduce these numbers; [145438]

(2) what action he is taking *(a)* to reduce the numbers of animals used in scientific procedures and *(b)* to encourage the use of alternatives; [145439]

(3) what action he is taking to ensure that the use of animals in scientific experiments is restricted to those experiments where no alternative methods are available. [145440]

Caroline Flint: The number of animals used in scientific procedures in Great Britain in each of the last ten years for which figures are available is as follows:

	Number
1993	2,759,940
1994	2,772,758
1995	2,637,847
1996	2,646,026
1997	2,573,088
1998	2,593,587
1999	2,569,295
2000	2,642,993
2001	2,567,713
2002	2,655,876

Under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, the Home Office can only license the use of animals for scientific purposes where there is no non-animal alternative, and then only when both the number of animals to be used and any resulting suffering is minimised. This reflects the principles of the 3Rs—the refinement of scientific procedures, the reduction of the number of animals used and their replacement with other methods wherever possible. However, as a demand-led regulator working on a case-by-case basis, we have no control over the total amount of research taking place. That is determined by a number of factors, including the economic climate and global trends in scientific endeavour.

It is essential that we continue to regulate effectively. We must also continue to apply fully the 3Rs, and to support and encourage their development and promotion. We do this in a number of ways. For example, all applications are subjected to scrutiny within institutional local ethical review processes at licensed establishments, and are also assessed separately by Home Office Inspectors, who are all either medical or veterinary graduates, to ensure that no relevant replacement, reduction or refinement measure has been overlooked.

We are also currently exploring the recommendation by the House of Lords Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures that there should be a United Kingdom centre for research into the 3Rs. This is being considered by the Inter-Departmental Group on the 3Rs, led by the Home Office and also comprising officials from the Department of Health, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Office of Science and Technology, the Food Standards Agency, the Health and Safety Executive, and other agencies. The Inter-Departmental Group is also reviewing the effectiveness of the Inter-Departmental Data Sharing Concordat announced in August 2000, which commits United Kingdom regulatory authorities to help resolve legal and other obstacles and encourages

data sharing between clients to reduce animal testing. The Inter-Departmental Group will report back to me on both of these issues shortly.

In addition, every year the Home Office makes available to the Animal Procedures Committee a budget aimed at developing or promoting the 3Rs. The amount made available to the Committee for 2003–2004 for this specific purpose is £280,000. Work aimed at improving the environmental conditions in which laboratory animals are kept and transported has also been sponsored. This is not the only money spent by Government on the 3Rs. We estimate that Government Departments, agencies and funding bodies spend up to £10 million each year on such research. Industry spends a great deal more.

On an international level, the United Kingdom Government supports the European Centre for the Validation of Alternatives Methods (ECVAM) through contributions to the European Union. It is the task of ECVAM to monitor and co-ordinate research into alternatives and to develop the processes of validation, that is, the assessment of alternative methods to see whether they are reliable and whether they produce a level of information similar to the animal based tests they are to replace.

This is not, however, an area where quick gains can be expected. In the longer term, we believe that further significant reduction in animal use will, and must, continue to rely largely on the scientific community's own efforts to develop, validate and adopt more advanced methods based on the 3Rs.

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that the highest standards of animal welfare are implemented in establishments using animals to carry out scientific procedures. [145441]

Caroline Flint: The Government are fully committed to the effective and efficient implementation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 which makes provision for the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes while recognising the need to use animals in medical research, the development of new medicines, and scientific testing.

Under the 1986 Act, both personal and project licences are required. These ensure that those doing the work are qualified and suitable; that alternatives to animals are used wherever possible; that the number of animals used is minimised; and that any suffering or other harmful effects experienced by the animals have been weighed against the potential benefits (to humans or animals) and have been minimised.

In addition, work can only be carried out at designated establishments which have suitable veterinary and animal welfare personnel and the standards of accommodation and care provided for the animals must meet or surpass the provisions of Home Office codes of practice. Under the Act, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate is charged with inspecting designated places to monitor compliance with these codes of practice and the licence authorities. About 2,500 inspections are made annually of which two thirds are made without notice. The number of visits made to each establishment during the year is determined by its size and the type of work carried out.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been made available to the Animal Procedures Committee in each year since 1997 specifically aimed at *(a)* developing and *(b)* promoting alternatives to animal experimentation; and if he will make a statement. [145442]

Caroline Flint: Since the financial year 1988–89, the Home Office has made available to the Animal Procedures Committee a budget for the development and promotion of alternatives which replace animal use, reduce the number of animals used, or refine the procedures involved to minimise suffering (the 3Rs). Work aimed at improving the environmental conditions in which laboratory animals are kept and transported has also been sponsored. Details of completed research are published in the Annual Reports of the Animal Procedures Committee, which are available from The Stationery Office and, for recent years, on the Committee's website.

The Committee seeks to allocate 60 per cent. of the budgets provided on research into reducing, refining and replacing the use of animals in scientific procedures and another 20 per cent. on the development and promotion of awareness and use of alternatives. The Committee seeks to allocate the remaining 20 per cent. to research into the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

The budget provided to the Committee for these purposes in each year since 1997–98 was:

	£
1997–98	242,000
1998–99	182,000
1999–2000	259,000
2000–01	259,000
2001–02	265,000
2002–03	280,000
2003–04	280,000

Asylum

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with EU partners concerning asylum. [145414]

Beverley Hughes: Government Ministers have regular discussions with counterparts in other member states on asylum issues. These discussions take place within formal bilaterals and Justice and Home Affairs Councils, as well as in the margins of other meetings.

Mr. Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applications were made in 2003; what the countries of origin were; and if he will make a statement.

Beverley Hughes: The table shows asylum applications to the UK by nationality for the first three quarters of 2003.

Information on asylum applications is published quarterly. Data for the fourth quarter and consequently the whole of 2003 will be available in the next publication at the end of February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by nationality and location where made, January-September 2003

Number of principal applicants

	Quarter 1			Quarter 2		
Nationality	*Total*	*Applied at port*	*Applied in country*	*Total*	*Applied at port*	*Applied in country*
Europe						
Albania	230	10	215	140	10	125
Czech Republic	20	15	5	20	15	5
Macedonia	35	5	30	10	*	10
Moldova	185	5	170	5	10	65
Poland	35	0	25	20	10	15
Romania	245	30	215	95	15	75
Russia	70	15	55	65	5	60
SAM[2]	345	20	325	175	15	155
Turkey	645	355	290	585	325	260
Ukraine	95	15	80	65	20	50
Other Former USSR	175	20	155	135	25	105
Other Former Yugoslavia	215	*	25	10	*	10
Europe other	2055	5	20	20	10	10
Europe total	2,125	525	1,605	1,415	465	950
Americas						
Colombia	90	15	70	60	20	40
Ecuador	65	15	55	40	10	30
Jamaica	390	65	325	215	35	180
Americas other	80	25	55	60	25	35
Americas total	625	120	505	370	85	285
Middle East						
Iran	655	190	465	625	190	435
Iraq	2,135	270	1,865	635	65	570
Middle East other	265	85	180	230	80	150
Middle East total	3,055	540	2,515	1,490	340	1,155
Africa						
Algeria	210	35	175	100	15	85
Angola	300	40	260	165	25	135
Burundi	210	35	175	145	25	120
Cameroon	185	20	165	95	25	70
Congo	145	25	120	55	15	45
Dem. Rep. Congo	460	100	360	300	65	235
Eritrea	245	115	135	185	80	110
Ethiopia	145	80	65	120	50	70
Gambia	15	5	10	30	15	20
Ghana	70	15	55	80	20	60
Ivory Coast	205	40	165	90	20	70
Kenya	85	20	65	60	10	50
Nigeria	350	180	170	250	130	120
Rwanda	120	15	105	70	30	40
Sierra Leone	165	90	75	85	40	50
Somalia	1,515	195	1,320	900	140	760
Sudan	95	25	75	135	30	105
Tanzania	10	5	5	5	*	5
Uganda	225	10	210	165	5	160
Zimbabwe	1,075	215	860	815	210	605
Africa other	410	210	200	340	170	170
Africa total	6,255	1,475	4,780	4,200	1,105	3,095
Asia						
Afghanistan	950	200	755	485	185	300
Bangladesh	205	25	180	190	25	165
China	915	630	280	705	525	180
India	490	190	295	645	260	385
Pakistan	490	175	320	375	85	290
Sri Lanka	300	135	165	245	130	115
Vietnam	345	60	285	230	75	155
Asia other	215	45	170	210	80	130
Asia total	3,910	1,460	2,445	3,090	1,370	1,720
Other, and nationality not known	30	20	10	15	10	5
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	16,000	4,140	11,860	10,585	3,370	7,210

Nationality	Quarter 3			January-September 2003		
	Total	Applied at port	Applied in country	Total	Applied at port	Applied in country
Europe						
Albania	125	10	115	490	35	460
Czech Republic	25	15	10	65	45	20
Macedonia	10	*	5	55	5	45
Moldova	70	15	55	330	40	290
Poland	10	*	10	70	20	50
Romania	120	25	90	455	75	380
Russia	65	10	55	205	35	170
SAM [2]	170	10	155	690	50	640
Turkey	530	260	265	1,760	940	820
Ukraine	85	15	70	250	50	200
Other Former USSR	170	45	125	480	95	385
Other Former Yugoslavia	5	0	5	40	5	40
Europe other	15	5	5	55	20	35
Europe total	1,400	420	980	4,945	1,410	3,535
Americas						
Colombia	40	10	30	190	45	145
Ecuador	25	*	25	130	25	110
Jamaica	190	20	170	790	115	675
Americas other	40	20	20	175	70	110
Americas total	290	50	245	1,290	250	1,035
Middle East						
Iran	860	210	650	2,140	590	1,550
Iraq	690	50	640	3,465	385	3,080
Middle East other	285	105	180	780	270	505
Middle East Total	1,835	365	1,470	6,380	1,245	5,135
Africa						
Algeria	125	10	110	430	60	375
Angola	215	40	175	680	105	570
Burundi	170	30	135	525	90	435
Cameroon	95	10	85	375	55	320
Congo	70	15	55	270	55	220
Dem. Rep. Congo	380	75	305	1,145	240	905
Eritrea	290	100	190	725	295	430
Ethiopia	190	55	135	455	185	275
Gambia	20	5	10	65	25	40
Ghana	85	20	70	235	55	185
Ivory Coast	50	15	30	345	75	265
Kenya	35	5	30	180	35	145
Nigeria	190	90	100	795	400	395
Rwanda	45	15	30	235	60	175
Sierra Leone	70	20	50	325	150	175
Somalia	1,440	200	1,240	3,850	535	3,320
Sudan	320	40	280	550	90	460
Tanzania	10	5	5	25	10	15
Uganda	170	10	160	560	25	535
Zimbabwe	710	145	565	2,595	565	2,030
Africa other	480	190	290	1,230	570	660
Africa total	5,155	1,100	4,055	15,605	3,680	11,925
Asia						
Afghanistan	470	165	305	1,910	550	1,360
Bangladesh	190	25	165	580	70	510
China	965	715	250	2,585	1,875	715
India	655	310	345	1,790	765	1,025
Pakistan	495	150	340	1,360	410	950
Sri Lanka	85	30	60	630	290	335
Vietnam	260	10	245	835	150	685
Asia other	135	35	100	560	165	400
Asia total	3,255	1,445	1,810	10,255	4,275	5,980
Other, and nationality not known	20	15	10	65	45	20
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	11,955	3,395	8,560	38,540	10,905	27,630

[1] Figures are provisional and have been rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2.

[2] Serbia and Montenegro (SAM) replaced Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) from 5 February 2003. SAM comprises the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Montenegro, and the Province of Kosovo (administered by the UN on an interim basis since 1999)

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many initial decision makers for asylum applications were in post on 1 October in each of the last six years. [142155]

Beverley Hughes: Records are available for the years from 2000. The number of staff deployed on decision-making depends on the volume of cases. Internal management information indicates that, as the backlog of outstanding applications has fallen and decisions have been made more quickly, the number of full-time equivalent staff deployed on making initial decisions for asylum applications was 477 in October 2000, 465 in October 2001, 396 in October 2002 and 365 in October 2003.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what written representations he has received from the First Minister of Scotland concerning his policy in relation to the detention of families with children in removal centres. [142763]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 December 2003]*: No written representations have been received from the First Minister of Scotland on detention policy as this is a reserved matter. The First Minister has, however, written recently to me emphasising the importance of the UK Government's careful engagement with this issue.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to permit asylum seekers in general to take up employment. [142768]

Beverley Hughes: There are no plans to allow asylum seekers in general to take employment. The European directive on reception standards for asylum seekers comes into force in February 2005. At that time asylum seekers who have waited more than one year for an initial decision on their claim will be able to seek permission to work. Although the employment concession for asylum seekers was abolished on 23 July 2002 we retain discretion to allow asylum seekers to work. The discretion is exercised sparingly but might be appropriate in cases where an asylum seeker has, through no fault of their own, waited for longer than 12 months for an initial decision on their claim. The majority of asylum claims receive an initial decision well within this period. 81 per cent. of applications for asylum received in the period April to June 2003 had initial decisions reached and served within two months.

We are currently considering whether asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers currently in work whose employment would meet the requirements for the issue of a work permit should be allowed to remain in employment.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Kent county council will receive central government funding in respect of the costs of asylum seekers outstanding for the financial years *(a)* 2001–02 and *(b)* 2002–03; when funding will be received for the 2003–04 financial year; and what estimate he has made of the cost to Kent county council in respect of support of asylum seekers between April and November. [144468]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 16 December 2003]*: All amounts claimed for 2001–02 by Kent county council—in respect of support for Adults and Families and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASCs)—have been settled. Payments on account of the 2002–03 claim have been made but the final claim is subject to audit before it can be settled.

Payments on account for Adults and Families have been made to Kent county council for 2003–04, based on grant claims submitted for the first two quarters. Payments on account have also been made in respect of UASC support costs, using the provisional rate for 2003–04.

Claims for the third quarter have not yet been submitted and so the Home Office's estimates have been made on the basis of the previous claims submitted for the current year.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers were removed or made a voluntary departure to the 10 East European candidate states for membership of the European Union *(a)* in each of the last three years and *(b)* in the first half of 2003. [141552]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 4 December 2003]*: Information on the destination of removals and voluntary departures is not available.

Estimates of the number of nationals of the 10 East European candidate states who had sought asylum at some stage and who were removed between January 2001 and June 2003 are shown in the following table. These figures include persons departing 'voluntarily' after the initiation of enforcement action against them, and persons leaving under Assisted Voluntary Returns Programmes run by the International Organization for Migration.

Information on the nationality of persons removed in 2000 and on those persons who departed voluntarily without informing the Home Office is not available.

Removals and voluntary[1] departure of asylum applicants, excluding dependants, of EU accession states, January 2001 to June 2003[2,4]

Nationality	*2001*	*2002[5]*	*January to June 2003[5]*
Poland	605	635	470
Czech Republic	800	790	585
Hungary	5	10	5
Lithuania	320	310	125
Latvia	170	175	90
Estonia	60	65	25
Slovakia	60	75	30
Slovenia	*	—	*
Cyprus[3]	5	15	5
Malta	*	—	—
Total	2,035	2,070	1,340

[1] Includes persons departing 'voluntarily' after enforcement action had been initiated against them, persons leaving under Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes run by the International Organisation for Migration, and removals on safe third country grounds.

[2] Figures rounded to the nearest five, with * = 1 or 2, and may not sum due to rounding.
[3] Data exclude nationals of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus.
[4] Data have been estimated due to data quality issues.
[5] Provisional figures.

The number of applications from nationals of the accession countries fell from 250 in October 2002 to 25 in June 2003 following the introduction (in November 2002) of the non-suspensive appeal measure included in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

The Home Office will continue to remove nationals of the candidate states in the same circumstances as now up until accession, although this will be kept under constant review. This is being done in the interests of maintaining an effective immigration control and the need to control numbers prior to accession; because we are not legally obliged to grant free movement rights under 1 May; and because we are giving free movement rights earlier than some other member states.

Data on the removals by nationality are available from the Home Office website at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases heard by the Immigration Appeals Tribunal in each of the last five years for which figures are available the tribunal upheld the decision being appealed. [142582]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 December 2003]*: Data on the number of cases in which the Immigration Appeals Tribunal upheld the decision being appealed, in each of the last five years for which figures are available, are given in the following table. Appeals received do not necessarily correspond to appeals determined in any given year.

Statistics on appeals to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal are published annually. The latest publication, Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2002, is available on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Asylum appeals—Further appeals to the Tribunal, decisions, and the outcome of Tribunal Hearings, excluding dependants, 1994 to 2002[1]

Number of principal appellants

	Appeals to the Tribunal[2]		*Outcome of Tribunal Hearings*[3]			
	Received	*Determined*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*	*Remitted to adjudicators for further consideration*
1998	1,775	[4]1,090	—	—	—	—
1999	2,135	1,790	—	—	—	—
2000	1,615	2,635	815	1,385	220	215
2001	3,860	3,190	475	1,140	150	1,430
2002[5]	6,920	5,565	620	2,015	225	2,700

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5. Numbers might not add up due to rounding.
[2] Figures based on data supplied by the Lord Chancellor's Department. Decisions and determinations do not necessarily correspond to applications and appeals received in any given year.
[3] Figures supplied by the Presenting Officers Unit. Figures for October to December 1999 are based on data for November to December.
[4] Revised figures.
[5] Provisional figures.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis he judges that the terms of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill as regards the removal of the children of asylum seekers are compatible with *(a)* the Human Rights Act 1998, *(b)* the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and *(c)* section 1 of the Children Act 1989. [143061]

Beverley Hughes: The Bill creates no powers for the removal of children of failed asylum seekers from their parents. Insofar as the withdrawal of support from people who have failed to establish a right to political asylum and who refuse to co-operate in their removal from the country leads to consideratipn by local authorities of the need for support for their children, it will be provided in a way that is consistent with the Human Rights Act, the Children Act and the United Kingdom's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been granted permission to work due to exceptional circumstances; and what criteria are used to determine whether an application will succeed. [143461]

Beverley Hughes: The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Generally speaking, however, asylum seekers are not now allowed to take employment while their claim for asylum is pending. Prior to 23 July 2002 asylum seekers could request permission to work if their claim remained outstanding for longer than six months without a decision being made on it. The concession was abolished on 23 July 2002.

The majority of asylum claims receive an initial decision well within six months. 81 per cent. of applications for asylum received in the period April—June 2003 had initial decisions reached and served within two months. 74 per cent. of applications for asylum received in 2002–03 had initial decisions reached and served within two months, 84 per cent. within four months and 87 per cent. within six months. The number of asylum seekers who would have been able to benefit from the concession had it remained in force is now much reduced.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the cost to West Sussex county council of the judgment in Behre and others *v.* Hillingdon London borough council, on asylum seekers in local authority care. [144993]

Beverley Hughes: The Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills are at present reviewing the grants arrangements for support of unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) in the light of the Hillingdon judgment. A decision on the 2003–04 grant will be made shortly.

Mr. Keith Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from local authorities on the implications for them of children being taken into care under the provisions in the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill. [145189]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* We received six representations on the provision in question from local authorities, or organisations representing them or the services they administer, during the consultation exercise we carried out recently. As we made clear in our response to this exercise, it is our objective to ensure that few, if any, children need to be taken into care as a result of this provision, and officials are meeting the Local Government Association in order to discuss its practical application.

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals have been housed at Oakington Immigration Reception Centre during 2003 as a result of the detention overspill facility. [145366]

Beverley Hughes: Following the success of the NSA process in 2002 that resulted in considerable intake reduction earlier than anticipated, there was the potential for utilisation of the Oakington facility. In line with considerations of public financial accountability a decision was taken to use part of the facility to detain families prior to removal on flights from nearby Stansted. It continued to be used for this purpose successfully throughout 2003.

The latest available information on people held in the immigration removal estate show that as at 27 September 2003–260 people were housed at the Oakington Immigration Reception Centre. Information on the number of these who were there as a result of the detention overspill facility and on the total number of people detained in 2003 is not available except by examination of individual case-files at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what purposes, in addition to making initial decisions on asylum applications, detainees are housed at the Oakington Immigration Reception Centre. [145369]

Beverley Hughes: Oakington is a designated place of detention and may be used to house persons under any of the published detention criteria, including detention under fast track procedures.

Mr. Keith Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific actions he expects local authorities to take to protect children who are not taken into care but whose parents have had their benefits stopped as a consequence of the implementation of clause 7 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill. [145584]

Beverley Hughes: We are discussing with representatives of local authorities whether guidance on the way in which they would exercise their responsibilities under these circumstances would be helpful.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the system to record the number of asylum seekers *(a)* entering the UK illegally, *(b)* applying for asylum and *(c)* being detained awaiting deportation; and if he will make a statement. [145676]

Beverley Hughes: There are no plans to change the system to record the number of asylum seekers *(a)* entering the country illegally, *(b)* applying for asylum and *(c)* being detained awaiting deportation. Information on asylum applications, detainees and removals is published quarterly. The next publication will be available at the end of February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has to abolish the support only provision for asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement. [146971]

Beverley Hughes: There are no plans to do so at present. Section 50 of the Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 allows us to withdraw the opportunity for asylum seekers to apply for financial support only. During the passage of the Bill through Parliament we gave a commitment that there would be a full public consultation process before the provision was introduced. The provision is also subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made for the UN High Commission for Refugees to work with Home Office training programmes to improve decision making on asylum applications; what the terms of reference are for UNHCR involvement; and when these arrangements will be brought into effect. [147728]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* The London office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees already contributes to the training of asylum caseworkers. We intend that this fruitful relationship should continue and we are presently discussing with UNHCR what further assistance they might provide in support of our measures to assure high quality decision making processes.

Mr. Crausby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost was in each of the last five years of police involvement in immigration controls. [147789]

Ms Blears: This information is not held centrally. Local police involvement in immigration controls forms part of the arrangements made by Chief Constables in the light of police authorities' policing plans.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions the powers

under section 6 of schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 have been used. [146492]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 January 2004]*: We have not so far withdrawn support from any family under this provision, although its availability may have helped induce a number of failed asylum seekers to depart voluntarily.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 16 October 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Miriam Adebeshin; [141584]

(2) when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 4 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Miriam Adebeshin; [144642]

(3) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 16 October 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Miriam Adebeshin; [147614]

(4) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 12 October 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Miriam Adebeshin; [142953]

(5) when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 16 October 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Miriam Adebeshin. [145961]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, on 12 January 2004.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. John Alosine Bangura; [147616]

(2) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. John Alosine Bangura; [144637]

(3) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. John Alosine Bangura; [145964]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to the right hon. Member on 8 January 2004.

Crime

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure has been allocated to *(a)* St. Helens, *(b)* Merseyside and *(c)* the North West region to tackle crime in each year since 1992. [141292]

Ms Blears: General grants to police authorities are unhypothecated to particular purposes and may be used as each police authority and chief officer decide, to support local policing plans. Government grant takes into account the whole range of policing activity, including tackling crime.

It is a matter for the Chief Constable and Police Authority to decide on the distribution of resources within the force area.

Police funding allocated to Merseyside and the North West is set out in the following tables. These figures also include specific grants agreed for particular purposes.

£ million

	Government grant[1] *Merseyside*	*North West*[2]
1992–93[3]	n/a	n/a
1993–94[3]	n/a	n/a
1994–95[3]	n/a	n/a
1995–96	196.92	752.65
1996–97	203.40	789.41
1997–98	207.64	805.79
1998–99	213.22	834.17
1999–2000	215.31	852.13
2000–01	222.23	884.26
2001–02[4]	234.24	939.82
2002–03[4]	238.42	962.04
2003–04	253.72	1,022.16

[1] Government Grant includes Home Office police grant, ODPM Revenue Support Grant and non-national domestic rates, Crime Fighting Fund, Rural Policing Grant, Basic Command Unit funding, Community Support Officer funding, DNA Expansion Programme, Street Crime Initiative and Special Priority payments.

[2] The North West region is policed by Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside forces.

[3] Before 1995–96, when most Police Authorities became independent local authorities, revenue support grant and non-national domestic rates were paid as part of respective county council grant funding.

[4] The grant figures for 2001–02 and 2002–03 are not directly comparable, owing to changes from 2002–03 in the method of funding the National Crime Squad and the National Criminal Intelligence Service. These bodies became centrally rather than locally funded.

In addition, Merseyside and the North West forces received the following funding in capital grant, including Airwave and the Premises Improvement Fund.

£ million

	Merseyside	*North West Region*
1995–96	6.69	22.54
1996–97	5.46	17.73
1997–98	6.64	19.05
1998–99	3.52	12.92
1999–2000	3.13	13.46
2000–01	3.97	17.59
2001–02	3.94	45.46
2002–03	14.0	36.56
2003–04	9.52	34.96

Drug Intervention Policies

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect drug intervention policies have had over the last five years in reducing *(a)* drugs crime, *(b)* drugs use and *(c)* drugs deaths. [146754]

Caroline Flint: The Updated Drug Strategy 2002 aims to concentrate resources on the most dangerous drugs, the most damaged communities and those individuals whose addiction and chaotic lifestyles are the most harmful.

Indicators of the effect of the strategy include:

(a) Drug crime (including supply)

The level of seizure of drugs and drug related assets is one indicator of the effectiveness of policies to reduce the supply of illegal drugs. Recently, over £20 million worth of cocaine was seized in one of the UK's biggest ever drugs operation, while over £37 million, suspected of being the proceeds of crime or intended for use in crime, has been recovered.

The Government are also addressing drug related crime—which includes high levels of acquisitive crime such as theft and burglary—by getting more offenders out of crime and into treatment. The numbers of problematic drug users entering treatment in 2002–03 increased by 41 per cent. to 140,900, against a baseline of 100,000 in 1998–99. In April 2003, the Criminal Justice Intervention Programme (CJIP) was introduced to break the link between drugs and crime and is now operating in the 25 Drug Action Team areas with the highest level of acquisitive crime. It will be extended to a further 22 DATs in 2004–05.

(b) Drug use

Data from the British Crime Survey (2003) demonstrate reductions in overall levels of drug use. For Young People (16 to 24-year-olds):

Reported use of Class A drugs in the last year has remained stable since 1996. Around 8 per cent. of young people had used a Class A drug in the last year;

Since 1998, those individuals reporting use of any illicit drug in the last year decreased from 31.8 per cent. to 28.1 per cent.;

Large decreases have been seen in the use of amphetamines (9.9 per cent. to 3.7 per cent.) and hallucinogens (5.3 per cent. to 2.0 per cent.) in the last year since 1998. However the number of individuals reporting cocaine use in the last year has increased from 3.1 per cent. in 1998 to 4.7 per cent. in 2002–03; and

Among young people cannabis use has remained stable since 1998. In 2002–03 25.8 per cent. said that they had used it in the last year.

For 16 to 59-year-olds:

Since 1998, those reporting use of any illicit drug in the last year has remained stable at approximately 12 per cent. in 2002–03, while those individuals reporting use of Class A drugs in the last year has slightly increased (2.7 per cent. to 3.3 per cent.);

Since 1998, there have been increases in last year use of cocaine (1.2 per cent. to 2.1 per cent.), crack (0.1 per cent. to 0.2 per cent.) and ecstasy (1.5 per cent. to 2.0 per cent.), although decreases in reported use of amphetamines (3.0 per cent. to 1.6 per cent.) during this period; and

Among 16 to 59-year-olds cannabis use has remained stable since 1998. In 2002–03 10.9 per cent. said that they had used it in the last year.

(c) Drug deaths

Department of Health figures for England and Wales indicate that there was a steady increase in the number of drug related deaths between 1993 and 2000, when 1,662 drug related deaths were recorded. In 2001 the number of drug related deaths decreased to 1,623.

The Government produced "The Action Plan to Prevent Drug-Related Deaths" in 2001. The implementation of this action plan is expected to make a vital contribution to reducing drug-related deaths.

Eurostar Terminal (Ashford)

Alistair Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the staffing levels were at the Immigration and Customs posts at the Eurostar Terminal in Ashford on Friday 28 November between 18.00 and 00.00. [144902]

Beverley Hughes: The immigration office at the Ashford Eurostar Terminal is normally staffed from 0700 hrs. until 2300 hrs. by immigration officers based at Cheriton.

On the evening of Friday 28 November, the immigration control was staffed as normal until 23:00 hrs. At least one officer was in attendance during the whole of that period. Officers do not control arrivals that have been cleared either at the juxtaposed controls in Paris, or that have been cleared on board. All cleared trains are notified to the office in advance. Only one train that evening had been cleared prior to arrival in Ashford.

Customs regularly deploy anti-smuggling teams to Ashford on a risk-assessed basis. They also participate in occasional joint exercises with other Control authorities such as the Immigration Service and the British Transport police. However on the 28 November there were no customs officers in attendance at Ashford due to a special exercise taking place at Waterloo International Terminal.

Alistair Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Immigration and Customs posts at the Eurostar Rail Terminal in Ashford are staffed at all times; and if he will make a statement. [144903]

Beverley Hughes: The immigration office at the Ashford Eurostar Terminal is normally staffed from 0700 hours until 2300 hours by immigration officers based at Cheriton.

Officers are scheduled to attend for all Eurostar arrivals which have not been pre-cleared. Immigration officers do not control arrivals that have been fully cleared either at the juxtaposed controls in Paris, or on board. All cleared trains are notified to the office in advance.

Customs deploy anti-smuggling teams to Ashford on a risk-assessed basis. They also participate in occasional joint exercises with other Control authorities such as the Immigration Service and British Transport police.

Gurkhas

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the findings of the Review on Immigration Law in relation to Gurkhas will be published. [147006]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 12 January 2004]*: The internal review of our immigration policy in respect of Gurkhas serving in the British Army will be

completed shortly and a report presented to Ministers. Once agreement has been reached on the way forward, I will write to my right hon. Member.

Health Worker Work Permits

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many work permits have been granted since January to health workers by each Government office region; and from which countries they have come. [146003]

Beverley Hughes: In the first nine months of 2003, 33,057 work permits were approved for posts in the healthcare sector. This figure includes initial approvals and approvals of applications to extend and to change existing work permits.

The table breaks this figure down by the nationality of the healthcare worker for whom the work permit was issued.

Nationality	*Approvals for health workers*
Philippines	8,749
India	7,367
South Africa	4,423
Zimbabwe	2,050
Nigeria	1,128
Australia	1,033
Peoples Republic of China	733
Pakistan	723
Ghana	653
Bulgaria	532
Others	5,665

Work Permits (UK) is unable to provide data broken down by Government Office region.

Illegal Guns

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* air weapons, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* shotguns, *(d)* imitation firearms and *(e)* handguns have been stolen in each of the last five years. [147396]

Caroline Flint: The information requested has been published in Table 2.11 of 'Crime in England and Wales 2001–02: Supplementary Volume', which is available in the Library.

Immigration

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for indefinite leave to remain were submitted in 2002 by those who had previously been granted exceptional leave to remain; and how many were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused, broken down by nationality. [141554]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 4 December 2003]:* The latest available statistics are given in the table.

The information relates to grants of indefinite leave to remain (settlement) to those who had previously been granted exceptional leave to remain.

Information on the number of applications submitted or the number of such application refused are not currently available.

Persons given exceptional leave to remain, granted settlement[1], by main nationality, 2000

	Number of persons
Bulgaria	5
Cyprus	5
Romania	5
Turkey	75
Russia	10
Ukraine	5
Other former USSR	5
Serbia and Montenegro	120
Croatia	35
Other former Yugoslavia	415
Other Europe	5
Europe	685
Colombia	40
Other Americas	10
Americas	50
Algeria	20
Angola	150
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	215
Egypt	5
Ethiopia	95
Ghana	30
Kenya	20
Libya	10
Morocco	5
Nigeria	40
Sierra Leone	45
Somalia	2,720
Sudan	20
Tanzania	10
Uganda	160
Other Africa	275
Africa	3,810
Bangladesh	*
India	20
Pakistan	75
Indian sub-continent	95
Iran	140
Iraq	335
Kuwait	15
Lebanon	85
Yemen	5
Other Middle East	20
Middle East	600
Afghanistan	1,890
China	15
Sri Lanka	90
Hong Kong	5
Other Asia	5
Remainder of Asia	2,005
Other and Stateless	30
All nationalities	7,280

[1] Excludes those previously given exceptional leave to remain who are granted settlement on other grounds; also excludes dependants.

Note:

Data rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2

18 Plus

Chris Bryant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding his Department and its executive agencies have provided to the 18 Plus organisation since 1997. [147351]

Fiona Mactaggart: Neither the Home Department, nor its executive agencies, have any records of funding the 18 Plus organisation since 1997.

Inward Visitors

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people visited the United Kingdom from *(a)* Poland, *(b)* Australia and *(c)* New Zealand in the latest year for which figures are available. [147174]

Beverley Hughes: The latest available information is given in the table.

Passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors, by nationality, 2002

	Total	*Ordinary visitor*	*Business visitor*
Poland	206,000	147,000	59,400
Australia	453,000	395,000	57,900
New Zealand	116,000	103,000	12,800

Note:
The figures in this table have been rounded to three significant digits; because of this the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the total as shown.

The information is available in the Command Paper 'Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2002' (Cm 6053), obtainable from the House Library, The Stationery Office and via the Home Office website http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hobpubs1.html.

Murders (London)

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many murders were committed in the areas covered by the *(a)* Metropolitan and *(b)* City of London police forces in 2003. [146416]

Ms Blears: The requested information is not available centrally.

New Citizens

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the development of the programme for *(a)* welcoming new UK citizens and *(b)* improving their competence in the English language. [144074]

Beverley Hughes: Becoming a UK citizen is an important step and we want to welcome new citizens with the right balance of solemnity and celebration. We hope that the introduction of citizenship ceremonies this year will help those who settle here to gain a fuller appreciation of the civic and political dimensions of British citizenship, to play an active role in society and to feel a greater sense of belonging to the wider UK community.

The 'Life in the UK' Advisory Group, which we appointed to look at the content, conduct and implementation of programmes of study for new citizens, published its final report on 3 September. The report made a number of recommendations concerning the provision of language programmes, both for naturalisation applicants and for new migrants. We are working with the Departments for Education and Skills and for Work and Pensions to assess the implications of these recommendations.

As we said when the report was published, we welcome the broad thrust of these proposals and are now looking at the best way of taking them forward; we intend to announce our conclusions shortly.

People Trafficking

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the harmonisation of legislation and penalties for people trafficking. [147319]

Beverley Hughes: The United Kingdom was closely involved in the drafting of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons which supplements the United Nations Convention against Trans-National Organised Crime. This requires countries which are signatories to adopt legislation to establish "trafficking in persons" as a criminal offence. The UK was also fully involved in discussions on the subsequent EU Council Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. This requires all member states to ensure that trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation or any form of sexual exploitation are punishable by terms of imprisonment with a maximum penalty that is not less than eight years.

We have acted quickly to deal with the worst forms of exploitation by creating an offence of trafficking for the purposes of controlling someone in prostitution within the Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act 2002, carrying a maximum penalty of 14 years. More comprehensive offences concerning trafficking into, within or out of the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation are included in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, these also carry a maximum sentence of 14 years.

A new offence covering trafficking for forced labour and removal of organs is included in the Asylum and Immigration Bill, which is currently before Parliament. Once this offence is in force the UK will be able to ratify the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what measures he is taking to protect victims of people trafficking who come forward to the relevant authorities; and what measures are available to allow the grant of an appropriate legal status to such people to enable their rehabilitation and integration into UK society; [147321]

(2) what plans he has for an information campaign to encourage the victims of people trafficking to come forward. [147320]

Beverley Hughes: The White Paper "Secure Borders, Safe Haven: integration with diversity within modern Britain"—published in February 2002—sets out our general proposals for assisting the victims of human trafficking. In particular a commitment was made that

> ". . . where such people (victims of trafficking) are willing to come forward to the authorities, we shall make special arrangements for their protection".

We are committed to helping the victims of human trafficking. On 10 March 2003, we launched a pilot scheme under which, adult female victims of trafficking for purpose of sexual exploitation, who are willing to come forward to the authorities and help law enforcement against organised criminals are offered protection and a range of support services, such as counselling and health checks in safe accommodation managed by a voluntary sector organisation.

The pilot scheme ended on 31 December, and in its place we have established the protection and support as a service stream of support to victims until the end of the financial year 2004–05. Although limited, the service will meet the current identified needs in the London area of adult women trafficked into the UK for purposes of sexual exploitation.

Through the pilot scheme in partnership with a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) we have developed a communication strategy that is to be launched early in March. It is multi-dimensional and aimed specifically at three target audiences—increasing general public awareness, potential victim awareness and reaching trafficked women who have not been identified. We are developing a range of approaches including posters, networking with agencies (Health, Social Care and Housing providers), multi-disciplinary training and media profiling.

The communication strategy will be run as part of the service providing accommodation and support to victims in the London area. We will consider its impact and potential for a wider campaign as part of the evaluation of the scheme.

We will continue to consider victims' legal status on a case by case basis. We acknowledge that, if they do co-operate with the authorities, they may risk reprisals against themselves or their families' abroad. We will consider, in the light of individual circumstances, whether it would be appropriate to allow them to remain here. But if they are not entitled to remain, and it is not appropriate to let them stay, then they must be returned to their country wherever possible. To do otherwise would undermine our immigration law.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts about tackling the cause of people trafficking through *(a)* socio-economic co-operation and *(b)* training packages for police and government officials in (i) transit countries and (ii) the countries of origin of those trafficked. [147322]

Beverley Hughes: The United Kingdom was closely involved in the drafting of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons which supplements the United Nations Convention against Trans-National Organised Crime. Article 9 of this refers to the need for social and economic initiatives, and Article 10 encourages the provision of training for law enforcement or other relevant officials. There have been a number of subsequent discussions at EU level to encourage the ratification of the UN Protocol. These have recognised that an effective strategy to combat human trafficking must include both preventative action to tackle the causes of trafficking, and training and capacity building in source and transit countries.

The UK is also contributing to, and has been involved in discussion about, the European Commission five-year (2003–07) AGIS funding programme. This will provide funding for projects in the field of police and judicial co-operation, focusing on combating organised crime, including organised immigration crime, and encouraging co-operation between law enforcement agencies. This funding provides an opportunity for member states to work together, or with new or candidate member states, to share expertise.

Funding under the EU Phare scheme is also available to member states for projects involving training for police personnel on organised crime. On 1 August 2003 the UK successfully bid for an 18-month twinning project in the Czech Republic, under this programme. The overarching aims of this project are to strengthen the fight and preventive measures against illegal trafficking and organised prostitution, to reduce the number of persons trafficked in the Czech Republic and to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement bodies to combat trafficking.

Tackling human trafficking in source and transit countries is an important element of the UK's strategy and alongside building on bilateral law enforcement to this end, the UK has provided funding for projects aiming to raise awareness and prevent trafficking.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convictions for people trafficking there have been in the UK in the last 30 years; and whether in each case the victims were *(a)* illegal immigrants intended for the sex trade or *(b)* babies or children to be sold on for adoption; [147316]

(2) how many people have been convicted under section 145 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002; and what sentences those convicted under this law have received; [147317]

(3) how many people traffickers have been convicted in the UK under laws other than the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 in the last decade. [147318]

Beverley Hughes: The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 received Royal Assent in November 2002, and sections 145 and 146, which cover trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, came into force on 10 February 2003. Data on numbers of prosecutions under these sections will be collected and published in due course. Given that the powers came into effect very recently, there is not any information yet held centrally about numbers of prosecutions. Statistics of court proceedings for 2003 will be published in the autumn of 2004. The maximum sentence for this offence will be 14 years.

Prior to the introduction of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, there was no specific offence under which people traffickers could be prosecuted. In 2000, the Government established a multi-agency taskforce called Reflex, to co-ordinate the UK's operational response to organised immigration crime. Under Reflex, a number of organised crime gangs involved in the smuggling or trafficking of people have been disrupted. Traffickers have been prosecuted for associated offences, for example, facilitation of illegal entry or living off immoral earnings, where trafficking

has been for the purposes of prostitution. However, comprehensive figures are not currently available centrally on the numbers of convictions for associated offences which relate to trafficking. It is therefore not possible to give figures relating to convictions for people traffickers for the last 30 years or provide a breakdown of data relating to victims in cases of trafficking.

Police

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for regional police forces in England and Wales. [147662]

Ms Blears: A major consultation exercise on the future direction of police reform was launched on 4 November with the publication of "Policing: Building Safer Communities Together". Among other things this paper opens the debate on whether the current 43 force structure in England and Wales is the right one for today's and tomorrow's policing needs. A copy of the paper is in the Library.

We are clear that any structural change will need to deliver improvements in police performance and delivery of service.

Rape

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which police forces use *(a)* the Early Evidence Kit produced by the Forensic Science Service and *(b)* the Tetra modules for the early securing of samples in complaints of rape and drug rape; and which use neither; [146778]

(2) what instruction his Department gives to police forces about the use of test kits to secure samples in the event of an allegation of *(a)* rape or *(b)* drug rape. [146776]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The Forensic Science Service (FSS) have supplied Early Evidence (K106) kits to a total of 30 forces, with 22 of these having ordered more than once. Regular users of the K106 include Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, the Metropolitan Police Service, Northumbria, Staffordshire, Suffolk and Warwickshire. FSS have received new interest and preliminary orders for Hampshire, Kent, Merseyside, North Wales, Surrey and Thames Valley Police.

The Home Office does not hold information on the use of Tetra modules by police forces.

Instruction on collecting evidence and how to conduct investigations is a matter for individual Chief Officers of police.

Romanies

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Romanies from East Europe have sought access to the UK in the past three years; and how many have been admitted. [146653]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* It is not possible to say how many persons of Roma origin have sought access and have been admitted to the United Kingdom. Data on the ethnic origin of those entering the United Kingdom are not collated and are therefore not available.

Arrest Statistics

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people were arrested by police forces in Scotland in respect of offences committed in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in each of the last five years; [147522]

(2) how many people were arrested by police forces in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales in respect of offences committed in Scotland in each of the last five years. [147523]

Ms Blears: Information on arrests collected centrally by my Department is based on persons arrested for 'notifiable' offences by police forces in England and Wales only. The information does not identify the location of where an offence was committed.

Information for Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive.

Street Crime

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been carried out by his Department into the dispersal of crime from areas targeted by the street crime initiative into outlying areas not covered. [147625]

Ms Blears: There has been no research into the disbursement of crime from areas targeted by the street crime initiative into outlying areas not covered by the initiative. The street crime initiative focuses on those areas which account for the great majority of street crime. In these areas, robbery fell by 17 per cent. in 2002–03. Across England and Wales in the same period, recorded robbery fell by 11 per cent. (14 per cent. adjusted for the National Crime Recording Standard).

Terrorism Act

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times the police have used powers under section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000; how many individuals this involved; and if he will make a statement. [145288]

Mr. Blunkett: Figures on stops and searches under section 44(1) and section 44(2) of the Terrorism Act 2000 are published annually in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin.

During the financial year 2001–02, police conducted a total of 9,239 stops and searches under section 44(1) of the Act and 947 stops and searches under section 44(2). During the financial year 2002–03, police conducted a total of 27,313 stops and searches under section 44(1) of the Act and 4,774 stops and searches under section 44(2). Figures for 2003–04 will be published when the relevant data has been collated and verified.

The above data relates to the number of times police exercised powers under section 44 of the Act. Information on the number of individuals involved is not collated centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Visas

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the number of countries *(a)* on the white list and *(b)* for which a visa to enter the United Kingdom is required; and if he will make a statement. [145273]

Beverley Hughes: The list of 24 countries designated under section 94 of the Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 can only be added to by Affirmative Order following debate in both Houses of Parliament. The list is kept under review and we will make proposals to amend it when we consider it to be appropriate. We have no plans at this time to amend existing visa requirements, although all such requirements are kept under review.

Women Prisoners

Angela Watkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of women held in custody in British prisons. [143414]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* The number of women held in custody in Prison Service Establishments in England and Wales, as at 14 January 2004 was 4,283.

Information relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for Ministers in the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Office.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what his policy is on returning to Zimbabwe people from that country who have made an unsuccessful claim for asylum in the United Kingdom; [145301]

(2) what his policy is on granting exceptional leave to remain to Zimbabwean nationals who claim asylum in the United Kingdom. [145302]

Beverley Hughes: The Government's position is, as it has been since January 2002, that each asylum (and human rights) claim made by a Zimbabwean national will be considered on its individual merits in accordance with our obligations under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Each application is considered against the background of the latest available country information including that obtained from and through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The suspension of removals of failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe announced in January 2002 was in response to concerns about the serious deterioration in the situation in Zimbabwe in the build up to the Presidential election held in March that year. We did not regard it as unsafe to return failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe, but in view of the rapidly changing conditions we considered that it would be appropriate not to enforce returns.

We do of course recognise that conditions in Zimbabwe are such that there are individuals who are able to demonstrate a need for international protection. Where they meet the definition of a refugee in the 1951 Convention, asylum is granted. There may also be individuals whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable and who would engage our obligations under the ECHR. Where this is the case these individuals will be granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave.

In the first nine months of this year we have granted asylum to 755 Zimbabweans and granted other forms of protection, including Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary leave (and their predecessor, exceptional leave to remain), to over 25 others. These statistics show that we are giving protection to the significant number of people who are found to be in need of it.

If an application is refused, there will be a right of appeal to the independent appellate authorities against that decision. Should a claim be refused and any appeal be unsuccessful that means that, for that individual, return to Zimbabwe would be safe. That is why we consider it reasonable to expect an individual in that position to leave voluntarily.

Although it would be safe to return failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe, our view at present is that in the wider context of the Government's position on Zimbabwe, it would be inappropriate forcibly to return them at this time.

The policy remains under continuous review.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Funding of Schools Programme

12. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the basis was for his decision on how funding under the funding of schools programme should be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the impact of that decision on Nottingham, North. [147877]

Mr. Miliband: We will announce shortly the local authority projects in wave 1 of Building Schools for the Future. We published our criteria for prioritisation in July 2003, and i have placed a copy of this guidance in the House of Commons Library.

Secondary education in every part of England should have facilities of 21st Century standard, and we are committed to deliver this goal within 10 to 15 years from 2005–06, subject to future public spending decisions.

Physics Graduates

13. **Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many students graduated with degrees in physics in *(a)* 1997 and *(b)* 2003. [147878]

Alan Johnson: The number of students obtaining degrees in physics was 2,440 in 1997 and 2,205 in 2003.

LEA Expenditure

14. **Mr. Plaskitt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on exempting local education authorities from limitations on their central expenditure. [147879]

Mr. Miliband: We have made clear that our priority for school funding in 2004–05 is getting money into schools' own delegated budgets. That is why a statutory limit on increases in central spend within education authorities' overall Schools Budgets is an important feature of the arrangements which my right hon. Friend announced on 29 October. We recognise however that some authorities, in exceptional circumstances, may have difficulty in complying with the national limit, and there is a process by which they may seek approval for a higher limit.

Early Years Education

15. **Jim Dobbin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what progress he has made with his policy on early years education; and if he will make a statement. [147880]

Margaret Hodge: Before 1997, whether or not your child could get a nursery place depended entirely on where you lived. By April 2004, six months ahead of target, every three and four-year-old child will enjoy a free part-time nursery education place as of right. That is the difference the Labour Government makes to children's opportunities.

By introducing the warmly received Foundation Stage for children in their early years together with the registration and inspection of all settings by Ofsted, we are ensuring high quality nursery education for all our children.

We are now starting to develop Children's Centres which combine early education with full day care, health and family support. 61 Children's Centres have been approved and the Chancellor recently announced in his pre-Budget review that we will create 1,000 Children's Centres by 2008.

Primary School Teachers

16. **Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many primary school teachers were on permanent contracts in London in September *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 2000, *(c)* 2001 and *(d)* 2003; and how many unfilled vacancies there were in each of these months. [147881]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: The information is not available in this form. In the London Government Office Region, there were 28,860 full-time equivalent regular teachers in maintained nursery and primary schools at January 1997; 28,870 at January 2000; 29,190 at January 2001; and 29,760 at January 2003. There were 450 unfilled nursery and primary teacher vacancies at January 1997; 520 at January 2000; 820 at January 2001; and 410 at January 2003.

Capital Funding (East Midlands)

17. **Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations he has received concerning targeted capital funding in the east midlands. [147882]

Mr. Miliband: We have received two letters supporting targeted capital fund bids in the east midlands. Although authorities in your region were not very successful in last year's round, the Department has worked closely with east midland authorities since then to try to ensure that they have a better understanding of the bidding process and assessment criteria. We aim to announce successful projects shortly.

Deaf Children

18. **Jon Trickett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps his Department has taken to ensure access to the full school curriculum for all deaf children; and if he will make a statement. [147883]

Margaret Hodge: All maintained schools—mainstream and special—are required to provide the full national curriculum and to ensure that all deaf children have access to it, other than where it has been disapplied.

Variable Fees

19. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether he plans that the cap on variable fees will stay at £3,000 until 2014. [147884]

Alan Johnson: I have already given my assurance that the fee cap will stay at £3,000 in real terms for the life of the next Parliament and I confirm that once more. Beyond that, any increase which is above the rate of inflation will, under the terms of the legislation, need to be approved by affirmative resolution which would require the consent of both Houses. I recognise that there are none the less concerns about the impact of variable fees on the university system: the Government will therefore establish an independent review, working with the Office for Fair Access, to report to the House, based on the first three years of their operation.

Adult Learning Grant

20. **Mr. Love:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps his Department is taking to promote the take up of the Adult Learning Grant. [147885]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are working with the Learning and Skills Council, further education providers and other partners to promote the Adult Learning Grant. The main focus of the 10 pilots is on promoting the grant to new learners starting courses during January 2004 and to existing learners who may be eligible but have not applied. This involves a variety of methods including posters, college prospectuses, advertising in the local press, on bus shelters and on local radio, and mail shots targeted at specific audiences. Over 2,600 people have applied for the grant.

Adoption

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the average time taken to complete an adoption placement was, broken down by local authority area, for the last 12 months for which figures are available. [143362]

Margaret Hodge: The attached table shows the average time in days between the local authority's decision that it is in a child's best interest to be adopted and the date of adoption, for looked after children adopted in England during the year ending 31 March 2002. A copy of the table has been placed in the Library.

Broadband

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans his Department has to assist in making broadband available to an educational institution available to the wider community. [147916]

Mr. Charles Clarke: My Department recognises the potential benefits to the community in schools being connected to broadband and making access to their ICT infrastructure more widely available. The 10 Regional Broadband Consortia for England are working with their member LEAs and schools in their area to develop this network accessibility.

The cross-government Broadband Aggregation Project, announced by e-Commerce Minister Stephen Timms in July last year, is also addressing the issues involved in using schools as broadband hubs for the wider community. Although there are some instances already where schools are extending access to the community, there are a number of issues to consider and resolve before defining the way forward in this area.

In terms of access to ICT more broadly, the Department's Extended Schools and School Community Links Team are developing guidance to assist schools in offering a range of ICT facilities to their communities. This guidance is expected to be available by the end of March 2004.

Children Green Paper

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills at what stage under the proposals in the Children Green Paper children will be given a unique identification number with corresponding data file. [145657]

Margaret Hodge: A Bill designed to improve services which protected children was announced in the Queens speech will be introduced to improve services designed to protect children. Subject to the outcome of consultation on the Children's Green Paper "Every Child Matters", the Bill will include proposals for local information sharing systems to enable practitioners to share early information about children and young people where appropriate. Implementation of the proposed local systems will require the development of a basic dataset on all children in an area together with a unique identifying number. This would apply from birth or if a child moves areas still has the same number. Only when a child comes into the country will she/he have to be allocated a number.

Civil Servants (Disabilities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what progress has been made in meeting targets for the proportion of people with disabilities in senior posts in his Department. [145999]

Mr. Charles Clarke: My Department's target is that by 2005, 3 per cent. of those in the senior civil service should be people with disabilities.

Statistical information about senior civil servants with disabilities is available on the Civil Service Statistics web-site at: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/documents/pdf/disability-octOS.pdf. This shows that as of 1 April 2003, the proportion of senior civil servants with declared disabilities is 2.3 per cent.

As there are less than five members of the senior civil service in my Department with a declared disability, the actual number is not published in order to protect the privacy of the individual in line with exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Specialist College Status

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools applied in the latest round for engineering specialist status; how many were successful; and if he will make a statement. [146500]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* 17 schools applied for the engineering specialism in the last round of applications for specialist college status, which closed on 17 October 2003. Assessment of the 393 applications received is continuing and an announcement will be made in approximately one month.

Education (Financial Support)

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list for each local education authority the financial support for education that remains to be transferred under the changes to local government funding announced last year; and when he expects this process to be completed. [144905]

Mr. Miliband: The Government introduced a new funding formula for local authorities in 2003–04. Floors and ceilings have been used on both the calculation of education Formula Spending Shares and Revenue Support Grant to phase in the new formula. This means that some authorities receive funding allocations above the level of the new formula and some receive funding allocations below the level of the new formula. The Government expect floors and ceilings to continue for as long as they are necessary. We have also said that we expect the Schools Formula Spending Share floor to be at least 5 per cent. per pupil in 2005–06.

The amount of damping through floors and ceilings on the Education Formula Spending Share for each local education authority is shown as follows:

	Schools formula spending share	*LEA formula spending share*	*Total*
Barking and Dagenham	1.0	(0.1)	0.9
Barnet	(0.2)	(0.3)	(0.5)
Barnsley	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bath and North East Somerset	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bedfordshire	0.6	0.0	0.6
Bexley	3.2	0.1	3.3
Birmingham	(16.5)	(3.0)	(19.4)
Blackburn	(0.5)	(0.1)	(0.5)
Blackpool	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
Bolton	(3.8)	(0.6)	(4.4)
Bournemouth	0.2	0.1	0.3
Bracknell Forest	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bradford	(9.6)	(1.5)	(11.0)
Brent	0.0	(0.4)	(0.4)
Brighton and Hove	6.6	0.8	7.4

	Schools formula spending share	LEA formula spending share	Total
Bromley	7.7	0.2	7.9
Buckinghamshire	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Bury	0.0	0.0	0.0
Calderdale	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Cambridgeshire	(0.1)	(0.4)	(0.5)
Camden	0.9	(0.1)	0.8
Cheshire	0.0	0.0	0.0
City of Bristol	(2.9)	(0.2)	(3.2)
City of Kingston-upon-Hull	0.0	0.1	0.1
City of London	(0.3)	(0.2)	(0.5)
Cornwall	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
Coventry	(0.8)	0.0	(0.8)
Croydon	1.2	0.2	1.4
Cumbria	(0.2)	0.0	(0.2)
Darlington	0.0	0.0	0.0
Derby	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
Derbyshire	0.0	0.9	0.9
Devon	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Doncaster	0.0	0.1	0.1
Dorset	0.0	(0.3)	(0.3)
Dudley	(4.0)	(0.6)	(4.6)
Durham	0.0	0.0	0.0
Haling	(2.2)	(0.5)	(2.7)
East Riding of Yorkshire	0.0	(0.2)	(0.2)
East Sussex	12.8	1.5	14.2
Enfield	4.5	0.0	4.5
Essex	38.7	4.6	43.3
Gateshead	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gloucestershire	0.0	0.0	0.0
Greenwich	(0.8)	(0.1)	(0.9)
Hackney	(2.0)	(0.7)	(2.8)
Halton	0.0	0.1	0.1
Hammersmith and Fulham	1.1	(0.2)	0.9
Hampshire	16.5	2.4	18.9
Haringey	2.7	(0.2)	2.5
Harrow	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.2)
Hartlepool	(0.6)	(0.1)	(0.7)
Havering	4.4	0.3	4.7
Herefordshire	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hertfordshire	6.6	0.9	7.5
Hillingdon	(0.7)	(0.5)	(1.1)
Hounslow	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Isle of Wight Council	0.6	0.1	0.7
Isles of Scilly	(0.1)	(0.0)	(0.1)
Islington	(0.5)	(0.2)	(0.7)
Kensington and Chelsea	4.1	0.3	4.4
Kent	33.1	3.6	36.6
Kingston upon Thames	(0.3)	(0.1)	(0.4)
Kirklees	(0.4)	(0.1)	(0.4)
Knowsley	0.4	0.3	0.7
Lambeth	0.4	(0.2)	0.2
Lancashire	0.0	1.5	1.5
Leeds	0.0	0.0	0.0
Leicester	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Leicestershire	0.8	0.0	0.8
Lewisham	0.0	0.1	0.1
Lincolnshire	0.0	(0.5)	(0.5)
Liverpool	0.0	0.4	0.4
Luton	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Manchester	0.0	0.0	0.0
Medway	4.0	0.4	4.4
Merton	(0.7)	(0.2)	(1.0)
Middlesbrough	(1.6)	0.4	(1.2)
Milton Keynes	0.0	(0.3)	(0.3)
Newcastle upon Tyne	0.0	0.6	0.6
Newham	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Norfolk	0.9	0.0	0.9
North East Lincolnshire	0.0	0.1	0.1
North Lincolnshire	0.0	0.0	0.0
North Somerset	0.0	(0.2)	(0.2)
North Tyneside	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
North Yorkshire	0.0	0.0	0.0
Northamptonshire	0.0	(0.2)	(0.2)
Northumberland	(0.2)	0.0	(0.2)
Nottingham City	(2.3)	(0.6)	(2.9)
Nottinghamshire	0.0	0.5	0.5
Oldham	(4.0)	(0.4)	(4.4)
Oxfordshire	0.4	(0.3)	0.1
Peterborough	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.2)
Plymouth	0.0	0.2	0.2
Poole	0.0	0.0	0.0
Portsmouth	1.5	0.4	1.8
Reading	(1.9)	(0.2)	(2.2)
Redbridge	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Redcar and Cleveland	0.0	0.1	0.1
Richmond upon Thames	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
Rochdale	(1.6)	(0.0)	(1.6)
Rotherham	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rutland	(0.3)	(0.1)	(0.4)
Salford	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sandwell	(6.7)	(1.0)	(7.8)
Sefton	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sheffield	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Shropshire	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
Slough	0.1	(0.0)	0.1
Solihull	0.0	0.0	0.0
Somerset	0.5	0.0	0.5
South Gloucestershire	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
South Tyneside	(0.1)	0.0	(0.1)
Southampton	2.8	0.2	3.1
Southend	4.4	0.5	4.9
Southwark	(0.2)	(1.4)	(1.6)
St. Helens	0.0	0.0	0.0
Staffordshire	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Stockport	0.0	0.1	0.1
Stockton-on-Tees	0.0	0.0	0.0
Stoke on Trent	(0.8)	(0.2)	(1.1)
Suffolk	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sunderland	0.0	0.0	0.0
Surrey	0.0	(0.4)	(0.4)
Sutton	1.5	(0.0)	1.5
Swindon	0.0	0.8	0.8
Tameside	0.0	0.0	0.0
The Wrekin	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)
Thurrock	3.1	0.2	3.3
Torbay	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Tower Hamlets	(7.4)	(1.6)	(9.0)
Trafford	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wakefield	(1.3)	(0.0)	(1.3)
Walsall	(7.7)	(1.0)	(8.7)
Waltham Forest	2.9	0.1	3.0
Wandsworth	0.0	(1.5)	(1.5)
Warrington	0.0	0.0	0.0
Warwickshire	(0.4)	(0.0)	(0.5)
West Berkshire	(1.2)	(0.2)	(1.4)
West Sussex	12.2	1.1	13.3
Westminster	0.0	(0.7)	(0.7)
Wigan	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wiltshire	0.0	(0.4)	(0.4)
Windsor and Maidenhead	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Wirral	0.0	0.2	0.2
Wokingham	(1.3)	(0.2)	(1.5)
Wolverhampton	(4.3)	(0.2)	(4.5)
Worcestershire	0.0	(0.3)	(0.3)
York	0.0	0.0	0.0

Education (North-west)

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much spending there was on *(a)* education as a whole, *(b)* nursery schools, *(c)* primary education and *(d)* secondary education in (i) St. Helens, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) the north west region, in each year since 1992. [141469]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is contained in the following table.

Education spending since 1992

	Pre-primary	*Primary*	*Pre-primary and Primary*[1]	*Secondary*	*Education as a Whole*[2]
St. Helens					
1992–93	[3]—	[3]—	28,898	35,041	102,426
1993–94	[3]—	[3]—	30,627	32,779	85,062
1994–95	[3]—	[3]—	32,871	32,844	85,310
1995–96	[3]—	[3]—	30,956	30,296	77,700
1996–97	[3]—	[3]—	32,117	29,771	78,556
1997–98	[3]—	[3]—	32,702	29,885	78,961
1998–99	[3]—	[3]—	35,645	32,198	84,024
1999–00	1,084	36,540	37,623	34,488	85,584
2000–01	1,831	40,133	41,965	37,845	91,093
2001–02	2,411	43,486	45,897	42,519	99,637
Merseyside					
1992–93	[3]—	[3]—	241,358	257,792	761,742
1993–94	[3]—	[3]—	248,440	245,652	675,489
1994–95	[3]—	[3]—	262,010	250,141	681,582
1995–96	[3]—	[3]—	258,121	229,249	634,928
1996–97	[3]—	[3]—	262,052	228,950	636,955
1997–98	[3]—	[3]—	261,716	228,303	633,227
1998–99	[3]—	[3]—	283,225	245,987	668,422
1999–00	8,562	295,022	303,584	285,872	706,519
2000–01	14,988	325,021	340,009	326,085	772,295
2001–02	21,048	350,485	371,533	365,721	838,990
North West					
1992–93	[3]—	[3]—	1,144,841	1,153,066	3,503,836
1993–94	[3]—	[3]—	1,158,010	1,049,978	3,056,288
1994–95	[3]—	[3]—	1,202,426	1,089,653	3,075,507
1995–96	[3]—	[3]—	1,185,076	1,000,413	2,826,562
1996–97	[3]—	[3]—	1,213,943	1,018,336	2,865,849
1997–98	[3]—	[3]—	1,221,486	1,027,733	2,887,946
1998–99	[3]—	[3]—	1,321,152	1,089,898	3,045,955
1999–00	46,199	1,394,850	1,441,049	1,286,311	3,229,306
2000–01	67,355	1,522,508	1,589,863	1,407,303	3,455,557
2001–02	91,379	1,676,685	1,768,064	1,588,239	3,798,289

[1] Expenditure was not distinguished between pre-primary and primary sectors until the inception of the Section 52 outturn statement in 1999–2000.

[2] Education as a whole includes expenditure on all phases of school education (including pre-primary), education out of school, continuing education and management and support.

[3] n/a

Notes:

1. Net current expenditure includes expenditure within schools and also that incurred centrally by the LEAs.
2. Figures are in cash terms and rounded to the nearest £1,000.
3. The decrease in local authority expenditure on education from 1993–94 reflects the transfer of responsibility for providing most kinds of further education from local education authorities to the Further Education Funding Council on 1 April 1993.
4. Financial data is drawn from the DfES Section 52 outturn statements from 1999–2000 onwards and the ODPM's RO1 statement previously.
5. Nursery education was not shown separately until 1999–2000, therefore figures for nursery are included within pre-primary and primary.
6. Figures are as reported by LEAs.

Education Spending Formula

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list for each local education authority the education formula spending share *(a)* before and *(b)* after the impact of floors and ceilings for 2004–05. [147993]

Mr. Miliband: The following table provides the education formula spending share for each authority before and after the schools formula spending share floor and ceiling of 5 per cent. per pupil and 6.8 per cent. per pupil are applied and the LEA formula spending share floor and ceiling of 3 per cent. and 3.75 per cent. are applied. These figures are as announced at the provisional local government settlement.

£ million

	2004–05	
	EFSS before floors and ceilings	*EFSS after floors and ceilings*
City of London	1.764	1.302
Camden	100.120	100.916
Greenwich	161.585	160.700
Hackney	142.929	140.163
Hammersmith and Fulham	81.081	82.024
Islington	120.778	120.072
Kensington and Chelsea	50.580	54.988
Lambeth	150.161	150.404
Lewisham	165.109	165.212
Southwark	173.607	172.032
Tower Hamlets	197.838	188.854
Wandsworth	128.368	126.896
Westminster	91.243	90.506
Barking and Dagenham	114.109	115.035
Barnet	171.688	171.198

£ million

	2004–05	
	EFSS before floors and ceilings	EFSS after floors and ceilings
Bexley	131.098	134.381
Brent	158.819	158.393
Bromley	154.848	162.787
Croydon	188.848	190.281
Ealing	169.680	167.005
Enfield	179.326	183.868
Haringey	142.057	144.595
Harrow	115.267	115.053
Havering	125.699	130.444
Hillingdon	149.017	147.900
Hounslow	134.449	134.342
Kingston upon Thames	70.300	69.904
Merton	86.351	85.364
Newham	219.323	219.210
Redbridge	150.033	149.909
Richmond upon Thames	71.882	71.850
Sutton	104.151	105.644
Waltham Forest	143.293	146.315
Birmingham	669.571	650.132
Coventry	167.999	167.248
Dudley	167.200	162.610
Sandwell	181.061	173.303
Solihull	114.340	114.340
Walsall	161.220	152.513
Wolverhampton	142.789	138.272
Knowsley	99.718	100.390
Liverpool	271.638	271.996
St. Helens	96.271	96.272
Sefton	148.992	148.992
Wirral	176.199	176.369
Bolton	155.564	151.168
Bury	97.015	97.015
Manchester	260.186	260.186
Oldham	143.382	138.967
Rochdale	127.920	126.304
Salford	119.915	119.915
Stockport	137.019	137.069
Tameside	125.655	125.655
Trafford	112.925	112.938
Wigan	163.876	163.919
Barnsley	116.031	116.031
Doncaster	165.404	165.475
Rotherham	148.802	148.802
Sheffield	258.301	258.209
Bradford	299.793	288.749
Calderdale	113.205	113.145
Kirklees	219.389	218.940
Leeds	362.994	362.994
Wakefield	169.734	168.416
Gateshead	95.173	95.181
Newcastle upon Tyne	130.952	131.564
North Tyneside	96.317	96.313
South Tyneside	84.239	84.179
Sunderland	158.906	158.906
Isles of Scilly	1.773	1.678
Bath and North East Somerset	79.391	79.391
City of Bristol	169.802	166.648
North Somerset	89.368	89.216
South Gloucestershire	125.169	125.041
Hartlepool	55.189	54.519
Middlesbrough	75.990	74.771
Redcar and Cleveland	82.467	82.520
Stockton-on-Tees	102.211	102.237
City of Kingston-upon-Hull	144.446	144.573
East Riding of Yorkshire	158.835	158.586
North East Lincolnshire	92.080	92.167
North Lincolnshire	85.175	85.175
North Yorkshire	283.087	283.102
York	76.022	76.036
Bedfordshire	204.933	205.485
Luton	121.135	121.056
Buckinghamshire	248.235	248.099
Milton Keynes	125.343	125.049
Derbyshire	364.793	365.664
Derby	127.965	127.959
Dorset	175.648	175.363
Poole	59.763	59.791
Bournemouth	68.580	68.872
Durham	253.727	253.776
Darlington	53.014	53.014
East Sussex	222.316	236.535
Brighton and Hove	101.411	108.842
Hampshire	587.937	606.795
Portsmouth	91.764	93.604
Southampton	110.462	113.528
Leicestershire	293.424	294.246
Leicester	172.869	172.802
Rutland	17.207	16.807
Staffordshire	403.262	403.191
Stoke on Trent	129.956	128.872
Wiltshire	217.519	217.111
Swindon	96.478	97.258
Bracknell Forest	52.563	52.563
Windsor and Maidenhead	65.606	65.512
West Berkshire	82.575	81.204
Reading	61.992	59.826
Slough	76.380	76.437
Wokingham	78.514	77.008
Cambridgeshire	263.679	263.139
Peterborough	101.333	101.086
Cheshire	334.188	334.188
Halton	72.080	72.170
Warrington	100.320	100.323
Devon	321.672	321.601
Plymouth	126.934	127.087
Torbay	61.837	61.784
Essex	658.698	701.999
Southend	87.400	92.273
Thurrock	80.789	84.096
Herefordshire	84.055	84.055
Worcestershire	253.776	253.498
Kent	688.677	725.321
Medway	144.235	148.638
Lancashire	593.907	595.392
Blackburn	93.106	92.580
Blackpool	74.614	74.572
Nottinghamshire	373.900	374.433
Nottingham City	147.408	144.519
Shropshire	135.222	135.205
The Wrekin	90.911	90.907
Cornwall	245.872	245.863
Cumbria	248.261	248.047
Gloucestershire	277.292	277.292
Hertfordshire	557.018	564.551
Isle of Wight Council	67.160	67.874
Lincolnshire	336.164	335.663
Norfolk	374.454	375.347
Northamptonshire	337.605	337.429
Northumberland	156.863	156.702
Oxfordshire	287.653	287.762
Somerset	237.086	237.617
Suffolk	319.484	319.484
Surrey	487.405	487.007
Warwickshire	249.596	249.140
West Sussex	348.263	361.527

English and Mathematics Tests

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of pupils achieved level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 test results for 11-year-olds in *(a)* English and *(b)* mathematics in 2003 in the London boroughs of (i) Redbridge and (ii) Waltham Forest. [147393]

Mr. Miliband: The following table shows the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level (Level 4) or above in the 2003 National Curriculum Key Stage 2 assessment tests in *(a)* English and *(b)* mathematics in the London boroughs of (i) Redbridge and (ii) Waltham Forest.

	(a) English	(b) Mathematics
(i) Redbridge	78	73
(ii) Waltham Forest	69	68

Further Eudcation (Plumbing-related Crafts)

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many students in England attended further education classes in (a) plumbing and (b) plumbing-related crafts in each of the last three years. [148046]

Alan Johnson: The numbers of learners enrolled on plumbing and related courses at further education sector colleges in the three years to 2001/02 are shown in the table below. Due to the variety of plumbing and related courses on offer, it is not possible to distinguish between those courses in plumbing and those in plumbing related crafts.

Learners enrolled on plumbing and related courses at further education sector colleges in England: 1999/2000 to 2001/02

thousands

	Learners
1999/2000	21.8
2000/01	23.9
2001/02	29.8

Source:
LSC Individualised Student Record.

Higher Education

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on the link between applications to universities and social background of students. [147018]

Alan Johnson: The social class gap among those entering higher education is unacceptably wide. The most recent UCAS figures show that in 2001 71 per cent. of applicants came from the top three social classes and only 29 per cent. from the bottom three.

The main problem is prior attainment. 19 per cent. of 18-year-olds from the three lower social classes achieve two or more A Levels, compared to 50 per cent. from the three higher social classes.

The Government have put in place a range of policies to raise attainment and aspirations. These were summarised in "Widening participation in higher education", published in April 2003. A copy is available in the House of Commons Library.

Information Technology

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many teachers were provided with information technology equipment to use in their own home in the last year for which figures are available. [146659]

Mr. Charles Clarke: The Laptops for Teachers initiative provided 68,507 teachers with a laptop computer for use at home and school during the 2002/03 financial year. To date, the initiative has provided another 60,235 teachers with laptops in the current financial year.

School Budgets

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list the schools in Huntingdon which ran a budget deficit in the year ending 31 March 2003; and how much this deficit was for each school. [146434]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is submitted to the Department according to local education authority areas, rather than districts within an area. Huntingdon is a district of Cambridgeshire local education authority. The information for Cambridgeshire LEA is as follows:

Cambridgeshire schools showing a deficit budget in the year ending 31 March 2003

School name	DfES number	Deficit budget[1] (£)
Abbey Meadows Primary School	2,450	(12,317)
Brington C of E Primary School	3,081	(4,470)
Bushmead Primary School	2,452	(55,343)
Cherry Hinton Community Junior School	2,312	(36,500)
Chesterton Community College	4,029	(220,765)
City of Ely Community College	4,083	(138,722)
Coleridge Community College	4,031	(84,470)
Ernulf Community School	4,077	(198,638)
Fawcett Primary School	2,336	(13,287)
Fowlmere Primary School	2,011	(1,892)
Hinchingbrooke School	4,503	(175,812)
John Falkner Community Infant School	2,035	(71)
Kings Hedges Primary School	2,446	(41,371)
Little Paxton Primary School	2,293	(33,790)
Melbourn Village College	4,040	(345,183)
Middlefield Community Primary School	2,257	(21,135)
Petersfield C of E Aided Primary School	3,331	(19,240)
Ridgefield Primary School	2,453	(12,977)
Sawston Village College	5,408	(84,516)
Sawtry Community College	5,403	(1,013,001)
St. Alban's RC Primary School	3,360	(15,361)
St. Anne's C of E Primary School	3,384	(38,893)
St. Helen's Primary School	5,200	(7,699)
St. John's C of E Primary School	3,072	(20,853)
St. Peter's School	5,412	(81,341)
St. Philip's C of E Aided Primary School	3,358	(7,960)
The Cromwell Community College	4,045	(1,842)
The Manor Community College	4,057	(583,428)
The Meridian Primary School	2,059	(6,828)
The Windmill Special School	7,009	(93,747)
Thomas Eaton Primary School	2,090	(7,273)
Witchford Village College	4,055	(163,030)

[1] The data are as reported by Cambridgeshire LEA's within their 2002–03 Section 52 Outturn Statement (table B) submitted to the DfES.

Notes:
1. Deficit budget is taken from table B column 13-other revenue balance. This includes the cumulative balance of income less expenditure from revenue funding sources during the financial year and the balance from previous year.
2. The data are as at 6 January 2004. Currently the data remains provisional as it is subject to validation and could change.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in Lancashire ran a deficit budget in each of the last three years. [146974]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is given in the following table.

Lancashire schools reporting a deficit budget in each of the last three years

	Number of Schools
2000–01	26
2001–02	16
2002–03	18

Notes:
1. The data are as reported by Lancashire education authority within their Section 52 Outturn statements (Table B) submitted to the DfES.
2. Section 52 data for 2002–03 is regarded as provisional and is therefore subject to changes by Lancashire LEA which may alter the results for that period.

School Governance

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the *(a)* total cost and *(b)* cost per issue was of producing and distributing the document, "Statutory Guidance on the School Governance (England) Regulation 2003", to schools. [147401]

Mr. Miliband: The Department issued statutory and non-statutory guidance on the following governance regulations in 2003: constitution, procedures, new schools, governance federations and collaboration regulations. The total cost of the production and distribution of this guidance for schools and LEAs was £25,986.26. The average cost for each issue of guidance was 10 pence.

School Meals

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on the provision of school meals by Lancashire county council; and how many meals are served each day in *(a)* high schools and *(b)* primary schools (i) in Lancashire and (ii) in each Lancashire district. [148225]

Mr. Charles Clarke: From April 2000, funding for school meals was delegated to all secondary schools. Primary and special schools can opt for delegation. All schools in Lancashire have the budget for school meals delegated to them, and have individual service level agreements with Lancashire County Commercial Services: schools can buy back in to the local authorities school meal service if they wish to do so.

This Department does not collect information on the take-up of paid meals. However, the attached table shows the take-up of free school meals in each Lancashire district.

Maintained primary and secondary schools[1]: school meal arrangements January 2003—By Lancashire Local Education Authority and each district within the authority

	All pupils				
	Number on roll	Number of pupils taking free school meals	Percentage of pupils taking free school meals	Number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals
Maintained primary schools					
Lancashire local education authority	98,784	13,172	13.3	15,575	15.8
Blackburn with Darwen	150	5	3.3	6	4.0
Burnley	8,300	1,625	19.6	1,977	23.8
Chorley	8,755	811	9.3	961	11.0
Fylde	5,040	386	7.7	412	8.2
Hyndburn	8,094	1,322	16.3	1,649	20.4
Lancaster	10,661	1,520	14.3	1,871	17.5
Pendle	7,904	1,487	18.8	1,753	22.2
Preston	12,062	1,991	16.5	2,383	19.8
Ribble Valley	4,791	171	3.6	201	4.2
Rossendale	6,044	838	13.9	942	15.6
South Ribble	8,919	754	8.5	822	9.2
West Lancashire	9,804	1,375	14.0	1,578	16.1
Wigan					
Wyre	8,260	887	10.7	1,020	12.3
Maintained secondary schools					
Lancashire local education authority	76,412	8,819	11.5	10,749	14.1
Blackburn with Darwen	—	—	—	—	—
Burnley	6,476	1,094	16.9	1,488	23.0
Chorley	5,757	474	8.2	575	10.0
Fylde	3,831	244	6.4	309	8.1
Hyndburn	5,052	820	16.2	968	19.2
Lancaster	9,037	868	9.6	1,146	12.7
Pendle	5,813	1,062	18.3	1,250	21.5
Preston	7,236	1,199	16.6	1,340	18.5
Ribble Valley	5,074	263	5.2	291	5.7
Rossendale	5,475	643	11.7	768	14.0
South Ribble	8,687	666	7.7	808	9.3
West Lancashire	6,107	813	13.3	1,013	16.6
Wigan	922	133	14.4	133	14.4
Wyre	6,945	540	7.8	660	9.5

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.
[2] Includes dually registered pupils and boarding pupils.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census

School-leavers (Qualifications)

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many pupils left school in 2003 with no GCSEs; [147443]

(2) how many pupils left school with fewer than five GCSEs at Grade G in each year since 1997. [147444]

Mr. Miliband: The information requested is as follows:

The number of 15-year-old pupils who left school in 2003 with no GCSEs is 32,590.

The number of 15-year-old pupils who left school with fewer than five GCSEs at grades A*-G is shown in the table.

Academic year	*Number of 15-year-old pupils with less than 5 + A*-G*
1997	79,602
1998	71,742
1999	66,884
2000	64,178
2001	67,044
2002	67,065
2003	69,851

Specialist Schools

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans he has to secure match funding for specialist schools in highly deprived former coalfield areas; and if he will make a statement. [147452]

Mr. Miliband: We acknowledge that for some schools in deprived former coalfield areas, raising the £50,000 sponsorship required to make a specialist school application can be difficult.

The Department grant-aids the Specialist Schools Trust (SST) and the Youth Sport Trust to assist schools with raising sponsorship. We have also introduced a 'Partnership Fund' to provide support to schools that can demonstrate that sustained efforts to raise the full amount of sponsorship have been unsuccessful. The fund is administered by the SST in accordance with the Department's criteria. In the October 2003 specialist school application round, 13 schools in coalfield areas received a contribution from this fund.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many Lancashire schools have applied for specialist status; and how many were successful. [148226]

Mr. Miliband: There are 12 local education authorities (LEAs), which cover the county of Lancashire. The information requested is set out in the table by LEA.

Local education authority	*Number of schools which have applied for specialist status*	*Number of schools which applied successfully*
Blackburn with Darwen	5	4
Blackpool	5	4
Bolton	12	9
Bury	8	4
Lancashire	63	33
Manchester	18	11
Oldham	8	6
Rochdale	6	5
Salford	6	3
Tameside	13	5
Trafford	17	12
Wigan	19	12
Total	180	108

Applications from schools in the October 2003 specialist school application round are currently being assessed. A list of successful schools from this round will be not be announced until the end of January and have therefore not been included in the list of successful applications.

Teaching Assistants

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what assessment he has made of the effects of the increase in teaching assistants covering non-contact time with classes; [147544]

(2) what percentage of classroom teaching was covered by classroom assistants without teaching professionals being present in the class in 2002/03. [147545]

Mr. Miliband: It is up to head teachers to determine how they deploy teachers and teaching assistants in their schools taking account of current regulations and guidance. Information about how teaching assistants' time is spent is not held centrally.

Standards of attainment are rising and the quality of teaching is the best ever. And teaching assistants are playing their part in raising standards. A recent project has demonstrated the positive impact of teaching assistants on standards. In 18 of the largest LEAs, additional provision and training for teaching assistants was provided last year for around 30 per cent. of their Year 6 classes. Results from the 2003 Key Stage 2 tests shows that performance in participating schools appears to have improved by 3 per cent. points more than the national average for English and 2 per cent. points for maths.

Tuition Fees

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what legislation was implemented between 1997 and 2001 preventing the introduction of university top-up fees. [147842]

Alan Johnson: The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 section 26 imposes conditions upon tuition fees for full-time undergraduates. Section 26(5) provides that the amount of tuition fee that can be charged should not exceed the maximum amount of tuition fee grant. The Student Support regulations, which are laid annually, set out the maximum amount of tuition fee grant. In 2003/04, the maximum amount of tuition fee grant is £1,125.

University Bursaries

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what the income levels will be at which students will qualify for the receipt of university bursaries; [148209]

(2) what his policy is on the indexation of family income levels at which students will qualify to receive *(a)* grants and fee remission and *(b)* university bursaries. [148210]

Alan Johnson: The family income thresholds are uprated annually to take account of inflation. The uprating is based on the Treasury's forecast in October each year of the forecast rise in the Retail Price Index (less Mortgage Interest Repayments).

As regards university bursaries, the level and type of financial support will differ between institutions. However, as a minimum, we want to ensure, via the Director for Fair Access that no student who qualifies for maximum state support, in terms of the new higher education grant and the existing fee remission grant, has to take on additional debt as a result of higher fees. The director will expect more from institutions with further to go in widening participation.

University Funding

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how much of the total sum of new funding that the Government believes universities in England require is required by universities in *(a)* the South East region and *(b)* London; [148033]

(2) how much of the total sum of new funding that the Government believes universities in England require is required by universities in the North West region; [148034]

(3) how much of the total sum of new funding that the Government believes universities in England require is required for *(a)* physical science, *(b)* arts and *(c)* social science courses. [148047]

Mr. Charles Clarke: The funding for higher education in England between 2002–03 and 2005–06 is set out in the White Paper 'the future of higher education' (Cm 5735). There are increases of over 6 per cent. above inflation in each year so that by 2005–06 the overall funding reaches almost £10 billion.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) allocate funds to higher education institutions according to a formula which takes account of the number and type of students at the institution, the courses they are taking, and other factors relating to the institution such as whether it has old or historic buildings. The funds are paid to institutions as a block grant and it is for the institution to decide how to spend the money.

Under our proposals for variable fees, it will be for institutions to decide the level of any fee which they charge, taking account of a number of factors, including their financial needs.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 January 2004

DEFENCE

Biological Weapons

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the United Kingdom Government's policy is on the export of *(a)* bacillus anthracis, *(b)* clostridium botulinum, *(c)* histoplasma capsulatum, *(d)* brucella, *(e)* melitensis and *(f)* clostridium perfringens by other countries. [146722]

Mr. MacShane: I have been asked to reply.

The export of these biological materials is controlled by States' obligations under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). They are, however, all materials that have a legitimate use in laboratories and facilities for the production of vaccines to protect against the diseases that may be caused by exposure to them. Their export, in small quantities consistent with legitimate medical and scientific research to established scientific institutions in states that are Party to the BTWC, is not banned under the Convention.

The Government would expect all other countries to scrutinise any applications for such exports with the same rigour as we would for exports from the United Kingdom.

Boards of Inquiry

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many boards of inquiry into deaths of military personnel have been established in each year since 1990. [142115]

Mr. Ingram: Not all military deaths are subject to boards of inquiry. However, details of military deaths investigated by boards of inquiry or other investigations are as follows:

	Royal Navy	*Army*[1]	*RAF*[2]
1990	8	74	15
1991	11	104	9
1992	4	73	9
1993	10	61	8
1994	4	60	11
1995	6	66	11
1996	6	45	8
1997	10	35	4
1998	6	50	7
1999	5	45	6
2000	5	49	3
2001	5	42	4
2002	8	44	3
Total	88	748	98

[1] Includes road accidents on duty and hostile action (not normally subject to Service investigation).
[2] Includes Army, USAF and Italian military personnel killed in RAF aircraft accidents.

Communications

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training was made available for UK forces personnel on the Oscar communications system; and if he will make a statement. [147278]

Mr. Ingram: The three key elements of the Operations and Strategic Communications Architecture (OSCA) are Multiplexers, Exchanges and Military satellite terminals. Prior to deployment, personnel received training on all three of these elements. Training was conducted by a mixture of military and civilian courses, and was supplemented by having Subject Matter Expects (SMEs) available in theatre.

Defence Spending

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 943W, on defence spending, what the limits are on the UK's ability to conduct unilateral national operations in pursuance of security objectives; and if he will make a statement. [148530]

Mr. Hoon: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5 of the Defence White Paper, Delivering Security in a Changing World (Cm 6041–1).

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146915]

Mr. Caplin: The number of civilian and Service personnel working in the West Midlands and Staffordshire are detailed as follows:

	West Midlands Government Office Region	*Staffordshire*[1]
Civilian Staff as at 1 November 2003[2]	4,790	[3]800
Service personnel as at 1 July 2002[4]	6,740	1,080

[1] The Department does not hold information on staff based in the North Staffordshire area.
[2] Figures are for permanent industrial and non-industrial staff, excluding Royal Fleet Auxiliary, those on career breaks, long-term sick, secondments etc.
[3] The civilian figure for Staffordshire is an approximation as the Department does not routinely publish data below Government Office Region level.
[4] Figures are taken from Tri-Service Publication 10, last published in July 02.

Flying Hours

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the current funded flying hours are for *(a)* Hercules, *(b)* Nimrod, *(c)* Chinook, *(d)* Sea King, *(e)* Puma, *(f)* Lynx, *(g)* Tornado F3, *(h)* Tornado GR4, *(i)* Harrier GR7, *(j)* Sea Harrier and *(k)* Jaguar aircraft of each type; and what amount of funded flying hours these aircraft had in each of the preceding three years. [145646]

Mr. Ingram: The following table shows funded (that is planned) flying hours.

	Financial year			
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Hercules	36,709	36,709	37,458	37,458
Nimrod	12,265	12,432	11,830	12,495
Chinook	13,744	13,776	14,200	15,504
Sea King	42,575	41,413	35,400	33,870
Puma	13,550	15,210	14,400	14,857
Lynx	49,150	40,100	36,500	36,075
Tornado F3	26,136	24,193	23,022	25,468
Tornado GR4	28,572	26,366	26,058	27,733
Harrier GR7	15,379	15,282	14,809	14,783
Sea Harrier	6,320	6,565	6,003	6,850
Jaguar	12,215	12,543	12,996	12,446

Iraq

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the Iraqi civilians killed in incidents which have been investigated since the end of the conflict by the Special Investigation Branch. [141674]

Mr. Ingram: United Kingdom Military Authorities in Iraq have investigated or are investigating the deaths of the following Iraqi Civilians, all of which are thought to have occurred since 1 May 2003:

Ali Salaam Aziz Mohammed
Dyab Rehman Nasser
Rhadi Nama
Ahmed Jabber Kareem
Nadhem Abdulha
Abd Al Jubba Mousa Ali
Hazma Abdul Hussein Al-Askary
Said Shabram
Wael Jabber Raheem
Jasim Yassim Jabbar Al-Shimillwy
Waleed Fiay Mezban
Baha Nasheem Mohammed
Hassan Abbad Saied
Hussan Said Shaba Al-Bata.

Eight of these investigations have been completed. In three cases, the deaths were found to be as a result of road traffic accidents; in three cases it was found that troops had behaved in accordance with their Rules of Engagement and that there was no case to answer; in one case it was found that death had resulted from natural causes; and one case has been referred to the Army Prosecuting Authority to determine whether charges will be brought. Six of these investigations are on-going.

An investigation is also being conducted into the death of Ather Karen Al-Mowafakia, which occurred prior to 1 May 2003.

In addition, investigations have been conducted into an incident in which a member of UK armed forces and an Iraqi civilian (who has yet to be identified) died, and into a fatal traffic accident in which a Kuwaiti civilian died, the name of whom has been withheld by Iraqi police. Both of these incidents occurred before 1 May 2003. The first investigation is on-going; the second has concluded and determined that the incident was an accident.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his Answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 127W, on Iraq, if he will name the individuals whose deaths are being investigated; on what date each died; on what date each investigation began; and what stage each investigation has reached. [143058]

Mr. Ingram: The information requested is as follows:

Date Of Incident	Date Investigation Started	Name of Iraqi Civilian	Stage of Investigation
8 May 2003	8 May 2003	Radhi Natna	Investigation complete
8 May 2003	11 May 2003	Ahmad Jabber Kareem	Investigation ongoing
17 May 2003	17 May 2003	Abd Al Jubba Mousa All	Investigation ongoing
24 May 2003	24 May 2003	Said Shabram	Investigation ongoing
2 Aug 2003	4 Aug 2003	Hassan Abbad Said	Investigation ongoing
14 Sep 2003	15 Sept 2003	Baha Nasheem Mohammed	Investigation ongoing

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many claims have been submitted to the UK under section 6 of the Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 17; how many of these claims *(a)* give rise to and *(b)* do not give rise to a legal liability to pay compensation under English law; how many (i) compensation payments and (ii) ex-gratia payments have been made; and what the (A) amount and (B) reason for the payments was in each case. [146848]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 14 January 2004]:* A total of 588 claims for compensation have been submitted to the United Kingdom Authorities under section 6 of CPA Order Number 17. Of these, 13 have been transferred to other contingents/organisations, 226 have been repudiated, 57 have received payment, and the remainder are still under investigation. The following table summarises the compensation payments made to date:

Category	Number of Cases	Total Settlements (£)
Fatalities	3	8,125
Personal Injury	20	7,250
Property Damage	7	34,243
Road Traffic Accidents	27	22,606
Total	57	72,224

Ex-Gratia Payments are not covered by Section 6 of the Coalition Provisional Authority Number 17.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what strategy he is pursuing to *(a)* recover and *(b)* dispose of weaponry contaminated by depleted uranium in Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [148054]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 12 January 2004. *Official Report*, column 537W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Llew Smith).

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the total volume is of depleted uranium tipped weapons used in Iraq between March and May 2003; and if he will make a statement. [148295]

Mr. Ingram: There are no depleted uranium tipped weapons in UK service. However, UK forces in Iraq used a depleted uranium (DU) round in anti-armour operations. The round comprises an outer casing or "sabot" that surrounds a long rod penetrator made of DU, plus charge and igniter components. 1.9 tonnes of DU were expended by British Challenger tanks during the recent conflict in Iraq.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the availability is of cluster bombs to United Kingdom forces in Iraq. [148297]

Mr. Ingram: There are no cluster bombs held by UK forces in Iraq.

Manning Control

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to carry out manning control point reviews within the next 15–18 months. [147889]

Mr. Caplin: There are currently no plans to conduct any Manning Control Point reviews in the next 15–18 months.

Missile Defence Technology

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amount spent by the Government on research into missile defence technology in each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement. [142196]

Mr. Hoon *[holding reply 10 December 2003]*: Expenditure by the United Kingdom Government on research specific to Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) technology began in 1994–96 when the Pre-feasibility Programme was undertaken. This examined options, costs and timescales of BMD for the UK and its deployed forces at a cost of £2 million in Financial Year 1994–95 and £2.5 million in Financial Year 1995–96. An extension was completed in Financial Year 1997–98 at a cost of £300,000.

As part of the Corporate Research programme, the Technology Readiness and Risk Assessment Programme (TRRAP) began in July 1998 following an SDR recommendation, focussing on BMD defence of deployed forces. TRRAP cost £2.2 million, £4.5 million, £5 million and £0.8 million in the Financial Years 1998–99 to 2001–02 respectively and completed in July 2001.

Alongside and following TRRAP, a programme of BMD studies ran from Financial Year 1998–99 to Financial Year 2002–03 at a cost of £0.5 million pa. In Financial Years 2001–02 and 2002–03 two further programmes examined the longer-range threat at a cost of £1.2 million per annum and assessed the significance of any capability gap at a cost of £0.6 million per annum.

In Financial Year 2001–02 research into theatre BMD building on TRRAP began at a recurring cost of £1 million per annum. Additionally in Financial Year 2003–04, £4 million will be expended on research through the Missile Defence Centre.

In summary, expenditure in the 10 successive Financial Years since 1994–95 is set in the table below:

£million

Financial Year	*Pre-Feasability Programme*	*TRRAP*	*Longer Range Threat*	*Capability Gap Work*	*BMD Studies*	*Missile Defence Centre*	*Theatre BMD*	*Total*
1994–95	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.00
1995–96	2.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5
1996–97	.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	.3
1997–98	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1998–99	-	2.2	-	-	.5	-	-	2.7
1999–2000	-	4.5	-	-	.5	-	-	5.00
2000–01	-	5.00	-	-	.5	-	-	5.5
2001–02	-	0.8	1.2	.6	.5	-	1.0	4.1
2002–03	-	-	1.2	.6	.5	-	1.0	3.3
2003–04	-	-	-	-	-	4.00	1.0	5.00

MOD Posts

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* service and *(b)* MOD civilian posts he estimates will be transferred to the private sector over the next three years from the (i) Royal Navy, (ii) Army and (iii) Royal Air Force. [148051]

Mr. Ingram: Officials are collating the information requested. I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Network-centric Capabilities

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 944–45W, on network-centric capabilities, what effect he expects the change of emphasis towards network-centric capabilities will have on the numbers of employees within the United Kingdom armed forces. [148686]

Mr. Hoon: At this stage, I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, columns 944–45W.

Northern Ireland

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons troops in Northern Ireland have been advised to avoid wearing *(a)* badges and *(b)* clothing which would indicate their support for the (i) Glasgow Rangers and (ii) Glasgow Celtic football clubs; and what representations have been made to him on this issue. [148442]

Mr. Ingram: The Army's role in Northern Ireland is in support of the PSNI, which has taken steps to remove contentious emblems under the Patten reforms.

The MOD advises Service personnel in Northern Ireland that the wearing of emblems and clothing including contentious football tops, which could be misconstrued as offensive, should be avoided. This is good practice and complies with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Code of Practice which recommends that employers promote a good and harmonious working environment.

I am not aware of any representations on this issue.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the number of Astute-class nuclear attack submarines available to the Royal Navy. [144690]

Mr. Ingram: The Astute-Class of nuclear submarines will progressively supersede the existing Swiftsure and Trafalgar Classes through a phased replacement programme. At present, the Ministry of Defence has a contract with BAE Systems for the design and build of the first three Astute-Class submarines. Decisions on the acquisition of further Astute submarines will be taken in due course. The MOD routinely considers changes to the future Defence programme to ensure that capability levels meet our anticipated requirements.

Permanent Secretary (Engagements)

Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates the Permanent Secretary discussed allegations concerning Robert Lee International and BAE Systems with the chairman of BAE Systems. [142411]

Mr. Ingram: The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence spoke to the Chairman of BAE Systems in May and June 2001 about allegations raised at the time concerning Robert Lee International. He also spoke to the Chairman of BAE Systems in September 2003, at the request of the Serious Fraud Office, in the light of the renewal of the allegations in the Press.

Procurement

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's procurement decisions have been the subject of judicial review since 1997. [147958]

Mr. Ingram: None.

RAF Bicester

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it remains his policy to *(a)* close and *(b)* dispose of the airfield at RAF Bicester. [147963]

Mr. Ingram: As I announced in my letter to the hon. Member on 29 August 2003, the site is due to be vacated by military users later this year. The site will be disposed of on completion of the planning process that will ultimately determine its future use.

Reinstatement Committees

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training members of employment tribunals receive to enable them to sit on reinstatement committees. [146179]

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

The training of members of employment tribunals is a matter for the judiciary. The emphasis in training chairmen and lay members of employment tribunals is on the exercise of judicial skills—making findings of fact in accordance with the relevant legal principles and according parties a fair hearing. This applies whether dealing with the over 70 different jurisdictions covered by the employment tribunals or when constituted as a reinstatement committee.

PRIME MINISTER

Chechnya

Tom Brake: To ask the Prime Minister what *(a)* representations he has received from and *(b)* discussions he has had with Chechen President Akhmad Kadryov. [148931]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, I have not received any representations from, or had any discussions with, President Akhmad Kadyrov.

Fatalities (Government Obligations)

Adam Price: To ask the Prime Minister what obligations are recognised by the Government as arising in cases where a person has died from a heart attack as a result of duress or harsh treatment inflicted by an agent of the state. [148321]

The Prime Minister: Any such allegation would be investigated and appropriate action taken on the basis of that investigation.

Government Performance Audit

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister whether a copy of the audit report on the performance of his Government, to be published on 16 January, will be placed in the Library. [148808]

The Prime Minister: No. Information relating to internal advice and consultation is not disclosed under Exemption 2, Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Iraq

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Prime Minister when he was informed that the USA was intending to wage war on Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [149053]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr. Allen) on 11 June 2003, *Official Report*, column 868W and on 23 June 2003, *Official Report*, column 616W.

Rogue States

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Prime Minister how he defines rogue states. [148677]

The Prime Minister: The phrase "rogue state" is generally used to describe those believed to be engaged in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, or those which support terrorism and offer succour to those who commit terrorist acts.

Thames Gateway

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had in connection with the Thames Gateway Communities plans regarding *(a)* the Crossrail Project and *(b)* a new Thames road crossing; [148200]

(2) which Government Departments are involved in plans for the development of the Thames Gateway communities; and what commitments have been made. [148202]

The Prime Minister: The Thames Gateway involves a number of Government Departments who are all represented in the Cabinet Committee on the Thames Gateway (MISC 22). Full membership and terms of reference of all Ministerial Committees of the Cabinet are available in the Library of the House.

The Government's policy was set out in 'Creating Sustainable Communities: Making It Happen in Thames Gateway' in July 2003, copies of which are available on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website. This set out a level of Government financial support, including £446 million of ODPM pump priming funding over three years, to enable the development of at least 120,000 new homes in the Gateway by 2016.

The Department for Transport's recent announcements concerning the inclusion of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link domestic services in the Integrated Kent franchise and PFI funding support for the Thames Gateway Bridge in East London demonstrate the Government's continuing support for investment in infrastructure in the Gateway.

On Crossrail the Secretary of State for Transport has asked a review team to look at the proposals for Crossrail from Cross London Rail Links.

I have regular meetings and discussions with ministerial colleagues and others on a wide range of subjects and will continue to do so. As with previous Administrations, it is not my practice to provide details of confidential discussions, under exemption 2 of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Mr. Gummer: To ask the Prime Minister what common factor makes it permissible for the US, the UK, France, Israel, India, Pakistan and Russia to hold weapons of mass destruction. [148676]

The Prime Minister: The UK is fully committed to the Treaties promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and supports their universalisation.

The US, UK, France and Russia, together with China, are recognised by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as nuclear-weapon States, as defined in Article 9(3) of the Treaty. Under the terms of the treaty Israel, India and Pakistan cannot be recognised as nuclear weapons states. The UK regularly calls on these states to accede to the treaty as non-nuclear weapon states.

The US, the UK, France, India, Pakistan and Russia are all States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). This Convention bans States Parties from producing, developing or stockpiling biological and toxin weapons. Israel has not acceded to the Convention, but is bound by the Geneva Protocol which prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons. The UK regularly calls on Israel to accede to the convention.

The US, UK, France, India, Pakistan and Russia are all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which bans the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and requires the destruction of existing stockpiles. US, India and Russia have begun destruction of their chemical weapon stocks as required by the convention subject to close scrutiny by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Israel has been a signatory of the CWC since 1993, but has yet to ratify it. The UK regularly calls on Israel to ratify the convention and supports calls by the EU and the OPCW to encourage it to do so.

WALES

Wales-only Legislation

Gareth Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what requests he has received from the Welsh Assembly Government for Wales only legislation to be included in *(a)* the current legislative programme and *(b)* the legislative programme for each of the last three years. [144399]

Mr. Touhig: The information is contained in the following table.

	Legislative programme
2003–04	Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Wales) Bill Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill Tourism Accommodation (Registration) (Wales) Bill Transport (Wales) Bill Smoking in Public Places

	Legislative programme
2002–03	NHS (Wales) Bill Common Land (Wales) Bill Sunday Licensing (Wales) Bill St. David's Day Bill Land Use Planning Bill Education Bill Audit (Wales) Bill Housing Ombudsman (Wales) Bill Passenger Transport Bill
2001–02	Health and Well-Being (Wales) Bill Education (Wales) Bill St. David's Day Bill Census (Amendment) (Wales) Bill

No formal bids were made for the 2000–01 session as they would have needed to be submitted at a time when the Assembly had only just been constituted. However, informal discussions resulted in a bid being made for a Bill to extend the functions of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The Assembly Government also informed us of the Assembly's call for a Bill to ban smoking in public places.

In most cases, the Government publishes Wales-only Bills in draft. The Assembly Government supports this and makes its bids in that context.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Small Arms Action Network

Kate Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funds have been provided to the International Action Network on Small Arms in the past five years; and for what purpose. [147888]

Hilary Benn: The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) were awarded a grant for €1.1 million in October 2001 under the joint DFID/MOD/FCO Global Conflict Prevention Pool's (GCPP) Small Arms Strategy. To date they have received £997,059 and the full grant amount is due to be disbursed by April 2004.

The purpose of the project is to develop regional NGO and civil society networks in order to increase political commitment, raise public awareness and co-ordinate global action to effect policy change in tackling small arms proliferation and misuse.

Afghanistan

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the security situation in Afghanistan and its effect on *(a)* the provision of humanitarian aid and *(b)* national reconstruction. [148100]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: Security in Afghanistan is one of the biggest challenges facing the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), especially in the South and East of the country where Taliban insurgents continue to encroach. The recent bombings in Kandahar, which claimed 15 lives, and assassination of a French UNHCR worker in Ghazni, are unfortunate evidence of this.

Threats to the safety of Afghan and international staff have meant that some NGOs and international organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to operate in some parts of the country. So far difficulties exist only in specific areas and organisations are doing an excellent job in working around these to continue providing assistance wherever possible. However, the overall effect on the provision of humanitarian aid and reconstruction is very serious.

The international community is heavily involved in helping the ATA deal with these problems, by helping reform its army and police force and through further deployment of joint civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The international coalition continues to counter Taliban fighters in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan and the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has recently been expanded to allow it to operate beyond Kabul. Subject to provision of troops by contributing nations this will enable it to support the UN-led programme to disarm and demobilise former combatants and facilitate other parts of the Bonn Process including elections.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) how many of the international secondments to Afghanistan from his Department in each of the last two years have been of women; [148111]

(2) how many international secondments of officials from his Department have been made to Afghanistan in each of the last two years; and if he will list their responsibilities. [148112]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: In 2002, DFID seconded two officials, both women, to international organisations in Afghanistan. One was seconded through UNDP to work in the ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development and the other was seconded to the office of the EU special representative in Afghanistan as his special Assistant. In addition we employed three UK staff in our Kabul office of which one was a women.

In 2003, both female secondments remained in their posts for a period. A male official was seconded to the World Bank office in Kabul as a governance and institutional development specialist. In our Kabul office we employed five UK staff of which two were women.

African Union

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what financial support his Department has provided to the African Union since the expiry of the agreement in August 2003. [147345]

Hilary Benn: DFID fully supports the vision of the African Union, particularly its key role in peace and security across the continent. Since February 1999 DFID has given £1,089,745 to the Conflict Management Centre of the OAU/AU. This is distributed in three tranches: February 1999 to September 2000 (£311,812); June 2001 to August 2003 (£677,933) and October 2003 to March 2004 (£100,000). The last tranche is via the United Nations Development Programme and will be spent shortly.

We have also been supporting an AU peacekeeping mission in Burundi bilaterally with £3.9 million to Mozambique as one of the troop contributing countries and we are about to release £2 million through the AU itself for the same mission.

Angola

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance his Department is giving to the Government of Angola for preparations for the general election in 2005; and if he will make a statement. [147776]

Hilary Benn: DFID's Country Engagement Paper (CEP) for Angola identifies the priorities for UK development assistance over the next three years. This includes support to the government and other stakeholders to prepare for the next general election. The date of the next general election in Angola has not yet been set however, with a possibility that it might be later than 2005.

DFID are currently in discussion with the Angolan government and civil society as to the nature of that support. Possible areas include: reform of the constitution and electoral laws, voter and civic education, election-related conflict management and election monitoring. Another proposal is to fund Angolan parliamentarians to participate as observers in some of the elections that will take place in the SADC region during 2004 (Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia).

Bilateral Aid

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he is taking to advance the target of an increase in the proportion of the Department's low-risk bilateral projects evaluated as successful. [148144]

Hilary Benn: DFID's 2003 Autumn Performance Report on progress against our Public Service Agreement, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House last month, reported that 80 per cent. of our low-risk projects are currently evaluated as completely or largely successful. Of the remaining 20 per cent., many of these are evaluated as achieving a number of their objectives. While this represents a high success rate, DFID is constantly seeking to improve the impact and value for money of all our interventions, including high, medium and low-risk projects.

All projects are subject to an approval process in which their potential contribution to our corporate priorities is assessed. Once underway, projects are 'scored' annually to review progress towards achieving their objectives. Fuller reviews are undertaken midway through their duration and once they are completed. We also conduct wider evaluations of our portfolio's success and of the lessons we have learned. The performance of our portfolio, and progress against this target, is monitored every three months by DFID's Management Board. These processes allow us to address slippage and make judgments about how our resources should best be used.

Brazil

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to his Answer of 16 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 237W, on the Indigenous People's Demonstration Project, by how much the expenditure on the Indigenous People's Demonstration Project in Brazil will be reduced over the next two years; and what representations he has received on behalf of the Indigenous People's Demonstration Project in response to the reduction in United Kingdom funding. [147742]

Hilary Benn: We expect to spend £500,000 during 2004–05 and 2005–06 compared to £700,000 originally envisaged. As savings have been possible in the cost of expert advice (recruiting a Brazilian rather than an EU national) and German aid funds are able to meet the demand for demonstration funds, we will be able to deliver training and capacity building activities at a rate similar to that originally scheduled for these years.

No representations have been made to either DFID's office in Brasilia or the British Embassy. DFID has, however, held discussions with the Brazil Cooperation Ministry to explain the reasons for the changes in expenditure. All project staff have been informed and are revising the project accordingly.

Burma

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the level of cross-border humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people in Burma. [147348]

Hilary Benn: We know that some agencies provide cross-border assistance to internally displaced people in Burma, but we do not have reliable information on the total levels of this assistance. DFID does not fund cross-border assistance since we are unable to undertake monitoring and evaluation in these areas to ensure effective use of funds provided.

We support the World Health Organisation's border health programme and the Burmese Border Consortium's effort to provide food aid to refugees along the border in Thailand, totalling £0.67 million in 2003–04. Internally displaced people are likely to be among the beneficiaries of DFID funding to tackle HIV/AIDS across Burma and basic health care programmes in two border states, towards which DFID is making a total contribution of £2.3 million in 2003–04.

Burundi

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance has been offered to the government of Burundi for the improvement of medical facilities for the delivery of new malaria treatments. [147822]

Hilary Benn: There has been no assistance to the Government of Burundi for the improvement of medical facilities for the delivery of new malaria treatments. However we are providing assistance through international NGOs and UN agencies, as are other donors, to cover urgent humanitarian needs. This includes funding for Medecins Sans Frontieres who have helped introduce the new malaria protocol. This year we are also providing funding of £250,000 to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the implementation of the new protocol. WHO will be working closely with the Government of Burundi.

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on cholera levels in Burundi. [147824]

Hilary Benn: According to WHO, the last confirmed outbreak of cholera in Burundi was in 2002. Since then there have been no further reports of outbreaks.

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress is being made towards the rehousing of those left homeless by the storm in the Bubanza province of Burundi. [147825]

Hilary Benn: It is reported that on Sunday 4 January 500 people in Mpanda Commune in the northwestern province of Bubanza were made homeless by a storm which destroyed 102 houses and a primary school. DFID have not responded to this problem directly. We are however providing support to humanitarian work in Burundi amounting to £1.18 million so far this financial year.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans he has to visit Burundi. [148110]

Hilary Benn: I have no plans to visit Burundi at the moment.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in Burundi. [148116]

Hilary Benn: DFID closely monitors the humanitarian situation in Burundi through our office in Bujumbura, and through regular contact with NGOs and the UN. The UK takes a leading role in the donor support group in Burundi, the objective of which is to improve assessment, co-ordination and response.

We concur with the recent UN assessment that the current major problems faced by Burundi are insecurity, disease and malnutrition. Life expectancy plummeted from 53.8 years in 1992 to 40.9 in 2001; there is just one doctor for every 100,000 people; the infant mortality rate for under-fives has nearly doubled from 100 per 1,000 in 1993 to 190 per 1,000 in 2001; and 69 per cent. of the population is under-nourished.

The UK participated in last week's Burundi Partners' Forum jointly hosted by UNDP and the Government of Belgium in Brussels. The meeting was successful in mobilising commitments of over $1 billion in donor support over the period 2004 to 2006, as well as making progress in establishing a simple co-ordinated framework to make more effective use of the donor funds being made available.

Chad

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what response his Department will make to the appeal of the World Food Programme for Sudanese refugees in Chad. [147773]

Hilary Benn: DFID is contributing to efforts to address the humanitarian needs of Sudanese refugees in Chad. We made a contribution of £1 million to the United Nations Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in December, towards the Emergency Needs budget of their Supplementary Appeal for Emergency Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Eastern Chad.

We are continuing to monitor the situation and may make further contributions if the situation indicates this is necessary. This may involve a contribution to the WFP appeal if there is a need for additional food aid.

The cause of the movement of refugees from Sudan into Chad is the fighting in Darfur, in western Sudan. We reiterate our deep concern at the continuing humanitarian crisis resulting from this conflict and call on all those involved to address the problems in Darfur through dialogue, to establish and maintain a ceasefire with independent monitoring and to allow unfettered humanitarian access to those in need. The UK has already contributed over £4 million to the relief effort (including to the UNHCR) and remains willing to use its good offices in any way possible to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Child Soldiers

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the extent of the use of child soldiers in *(a)* the Democratic Republic of Congo, *(b)* Burundi, *(c)* Rwanda and *(d)* Uganda. [148163]

Hilary Benn: The UK condemns unequivocally the use of child soldiers. The fourth report of the UN Secretary-General on the use of children in armed conflict has recently been issued and will inform debate on this issue in the UN Security Council later this month.

The UK discusses the issue with a range of UN bodies, particularly the Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict, and works with the UN system to eradicate the use of child soldiers, including our support for a UNICEF programme of capacity building to strengthen its response in emergency situations. A key element of this programme is improving its advocacy on the situation of children affected by armed conflict at all levels.

For DRC the UK is providing £750,000 to help establish child protection networks, and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) mechanisms in each province and at national level. Our support will help UNICEF in launching preparations and commencing activities for the demobilisation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

UNICEF reported in September 2003 that it was thought there were then about 1,000 child soldiers serving in Burundi's regular army, 1,500 in the pro-government youth militia and 500 in the rebel movements, though the exact number would only be available when the demobilisation programme was implemented.

Burundi ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, though the optional protocol banning the use of children under 18 in armed conflict was not signed at that time—the text of this has recently been submitted to the National Assembly for approval.

In Rwanda the UK is supporting research that is being undertaken by Save the Children to determine why more girl child soldiers from the ex-armed groups in the DRC are not presenting themselves for

demobilisation and repatriation to Rwanda.With respect to Uganda, one of the terrible features of the conflict there is that abducted children themselves become the combatants. We have raised our concerns about the safety of those abducted with President Museveni and senior Ministers. The UK has provided financial support to UNICEF and Save the Children to rehabilitate children who have escaped from the Lords Resistance Army. Also we have discussed with the Ugandan government reports of under-age soldiers being recruited by the government defence units in the North. The Government of Uganda has assured us that they are co-operating with UNICEF to identify and demobilise the recruits. Our High Commission in Kampala is monitoring the situation.

Debt Relief

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many countries he expects to reach completion point for the purposes of debt relief by the end of 2004. [148142]

Hilary Benn: Of the 27 countries that have qualified for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, nine have so far reached completion point and have received an irrevocable reduction in their stock of debt. A further 10 are expected to reach completion point by the end of 2004. Three of these (Nicaragua, Ethiopia and Niger) should reach completion point imminently.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to predict exactly when countries will reach completion point, because, instead of a fixed completion point date, the enhanced HIPC Initiative system is based on a 'floating' completion point. But even where countries miss their predicted completion point date, there is no delay to the delivery of debt relief, as countries cease to make payments on their debt from decision point.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. John Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs about the effectiveness of humanitarian intervention in Ituri. [148076]

Hilary Benn: We have regular discussions with the UN's agencies including OCHA, and consider the humanitarian response to the crisis in Ituri to have been effective to date. The humanitarian situation there has improved as a result of services such as food aid, emergency medical assistance, provision of potable water and increased sanitation facilities delivered by the relief agencies, and the UN has been able to negotiate increased access in the area for relief work.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the most recent discussions he has had with the governments of *(a)* Rwanda and *(b)* Uganda concerning their involvement in the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [148078]

Hilary Benn: The UK is seeking to help resolve conflict and establish conditions for genuine development in the whole of the Great Lakes region. We have maintained a close dialogue with the governments of Rwanda and Uganda, and indeed with the former Government and now the Transitional National Government (TNG) in Kinshasa, on the need for good neighbourly relations as the basis for national and regional stability. We continue to do so. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) will undoubtedly be discussed during the forthcoming visit to the UK of Presidents Kagame and Museveni.

Both Rwanda and Uganda have taken positive steps recently to normalise their relations with the TNG in DRC, including mutual ministerial visits and the signing in New York on 25 September 2003 of a Good Neighbourly Pact, which included commitments that all support for armed groups should end and that there should be no illegal exploitation of natural resources of the DRC.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many monitors and overseers the United Kingdom will send to witness and report on whether the forthcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are *(a)* free and *(b)* fair. [148081]

Hilary Benn: The Transitional National Government (TNG) of the DRC has not set a specific date for elections, likely to be either in 2005 or 2006; nor has it invited partners to send election monitors. Should it do so, it is likely we will participate in wider EU or UN efforts.

Helping the TNG and other stakeholders prepare for free and fair elections is an important part of our engagement in DRC. We are providing £400,000 for the Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA), an NGO, to help enhance the capacity of stakeholders to participate in the process of designing the DRC's institutional, constitutional and legal frameworks, including for a democratic electoral system.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what action he will *(a)* take unilaterally and *(b)* propose at multilateral level in response to the publication of the UN Commission report on the misuse of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [148082]

Hilary Benn: I refer the hon. Member for Buckingham to the Statement made by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Chris Mullin) on 17 December 2003, *Official Report*, Column 142–4WS.

We continue to urge the UN to provide the detailed information necessary to substantiate the allegations against British companies. We have urged NGOs to do the same.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with *(a)* his counterparts in EU member states and *(b)* representatives of the United Nations about the report of the UN Panel of Experts on illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [149186]

Hilary Benn: None. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are the lead Department responsible for discussions on the UN Panel of Experts Report with counterparts in EU Member States and representatives of the United Nations.

The issue of exploitation of the natural resources of the DRC is enormously important. We are already working with the new government in the Congo and with international and regional partners to help develop its institutions and to put in place effective management of the country's natural resources, including by playing a leading role in making the Anti-Corruption Commission effective and encouraging the Transitional National Government to engage in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

The huge potential of the Congo's natural resources should be exploited legally and in a regulated way, for the benefit of all Congolese. We want to see trade in natural resources become a cohesive factor in regional stability and not a cause of conflict.

Ethiopia

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on Ethiopia's debt burden. [147339]

Hilary Benn: Ethiopia qualified for debt relief under the Enhanced HIPC Initiative in November 2001 when it reached decision point—the first stage of the HIPC process. This means Ethiopia no longer has to service around $1.9 billion of debt. These debts will be formally written off when Ethiopia reaches its completion point as expected in the first half of 2004.

Ethiopia owes the UK £15.4 million but is already receiving full debt relief on this under the UK Government's bilateral policy. This provides 100 per cent. relief on debt service payments starting from decision point and formally writes off the entire debt after completion point.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the joint departmental scoping mission scheduled for April 2004 to consider reform of Ethiopia's security sector. [147340]

Hilary Benn: The joint departmental scoping mission for Security Sector Reform (SSR) comprising representatives of MOD, FCO and DFID visited Ethiopia in April 2003 in response to requests from the Government of Ethiopia. The mission recommended a phased engagement by HMG that would help make all parts of the security sector more accountable to the people of Ethiopia. Initial activities to strengthen bodies responsible for oversight and planning are about to begin.

We welcome the Government's recognition that reform of the security sector will enhance its capacity to fulfil constitutional obligations in respect of human rights.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how financial support from his Department to Ethiopia has been tailored to tackle the increase in global acute malnutrition that has occurred in some of the drought affected areas of Ethiopia. [147346]

Hilary Benn: Since the start of 2002 we have committed over £50 million of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia making us one of the largest donors of emergency assistance. This has been channelled through UN agencies, the Ethiopian Government and non-government organisations (NGOs).

A mix of interventions successfully helped to address global acute malnutrition (GAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in the drought-affected parts of the country. For example, we targeted localities suffering high levels of malnutrition with supplementary and therapeutic feeding through NGOs and UNICEF. This helped bring GAM levels in the most affected areas down to about 7 per cent. to 8 per cent. from over 20 per cent. at the peak of the crisis.

Some pockets of malnutrition remain in 2004 largely as a consequence of poor targeting and delivery capacity. We are providing support to UNICEF for building capacity of the emergency system and will continue to play our part as and when further needs arise.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the level of ethnic violence in Ethiopia. [147392]

Hilary Benn: There is still a high level of ethnic violence in Ethiopia. Ethnicity is the basis of most of the major political parties, including the ruling party. Many ethnic groups are politically and economically excluded.

Ethnic tension has led to fighting in Gambella (West Ethiopia) in December 2003. Up to 150 people may have died.

New legislation passed in 2003 will allow Federal Government to intervene in cases of human rights violations at Regional level and below. This indicates a growing willingness by Federal Government to accept ultimate responsibility for human rights violations at Regional or local level.

We take human rights very seriously and will continue to promote improvements through high level political dialogue, budget support indicators and support to security sector reform.

EU Aid Target

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the cost will be to public funds of the UK achieving the agreed EU target of aid amounting to 0.39 per cent.of GNI. [148143]

Hilary Benn: Under current spending plans we expect official development assistance (oda) to exceed the EU target and hit 0.4 per cent. of GNI in 2005, a year earlier than the target date. The cost of achieving 0.4 per cent. in 2005, including that part of oda which is not financed through the DFID budget, is estimated to be £4.9 billion.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147293]

Hilary Benn: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 517W.

Global Interventions

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether he has made formal representations to the United Nations about his proposal for global intervention in countries whose Governments abuse their populations, made in his speech on 30 October 2003 at the UN High Level Dialogue on Financing for Development; and what criteria would be used for such global interventions. [147449]

Hilary Benn: No formal representations have been made to the United Nations concerning intervention in countries with humanitarian crises. The Department for International Development is working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to contribute to the debate on UN reform. The High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change appointed by Kofi Annan has an important opportunity to make proposals for a more effective UN response in this area. The UK supports reform that will ensure that the UN Security Council assumes its full responsibility to guarantee peace and security. We cannot allow a repeat of the mistakes made in Rwanda in 1994.

Framing acceptable principles for intervention, so that people are protected effectively, and so that states are treated equally, is part of the challenge presently facing the United Nations. An important attempt to develop common ground on principles and criteria for intervention was made in the report of the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). We welcomed the commission's report, The Responsibility to Protect, which was published in December 2001. It attempts to move the debate from an unproductive discussion of intervention towards a new focus on the responsibilities held by states to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophes from mass murder, rape and from starvation. When states are unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibilities, it argues that the responsibility to protect should be borne by a broader community of states. It also stresses that the responsibility to prevent conflict is as important as the responsibility to react, and that any intervention is accompanied by a responsibility to rebuild.

Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the working paper from the International Monetary Fund on the effect of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative upon Africa's poorest nations. [148084]

Hilary Benn: On 1 September 2003, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published a working paper entitled "Fiscal Sustainability in African. HIPC Countries: A Policy Dilemma?" The paper focuses on the link between fiscal policy and debt sustainability. The authors concluded that, without more international assistance in the form of grants or private non-debt financing (such as foreign direct investment), Governments would need to raise taxes or scale down social spending programmes in order to maintain sustainable fiscal positions in the face of possible adverse shocks. The authors noted that the paper's conclusions were sensitive to assumptions on growth rate, interest rate, and exchange rate dynamics.

This problem has already been recognised by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the UK is pressing for additional relief at HIPC Completion Point, where necessary, to ensure that countries have sustainable external debt levels. On longer-term debt sustainability, the UK welcomes the report being prepared by the World Bank and IMF on ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries, including HIPCs, while enabling them to access sufficient finance for their poverty reduction strategies. We hope to reach agreement on the appropriate policy response at the spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF in April.

We also recognise that, in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals, an additional US$50 billion a year until 2015 is required from the international community. That is why the UK's proposal for an International Finance Facility is so important. It could provide the much-needed substantial increase in resources that debt relief alone would not achieve.

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what support he is providing to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS in *(a)* India and *(b)* China. [147529]

Hilary Benn: DFID India is supporting the Government of India's National AIDS Control Programme through the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) with a commitment of £123 million over a period of five years. The main approach of the programme is to support innovative, targeted work with highly vulnerable sections of the community in the various states of India. Our partners in this programme are World Bank and the US Agency for International Development. The programme includes support to UNAIDS for effective implementation of its HIV strategy in India and BBC-World Service Trust for media campaigns to raise awareness in the general public.

The communities covered under the programme include sex workers, their clients, street children, men who have sex with men, industrial workers and injecting drug users. For example, in West Bengal one of DFID's focus states, our work to date have covered more than one hundred thousand people through 17 NGOs in 52 sites.

DFID China is working in partnership with the Government to tackle and combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. DFID currently supports a £20 million HIV/AIDS initiative, which pilots replicable models of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care in Yunnan and Sichuan for high risk and vulnerable groups. This project aims to inform and develop national policy and good practice on HIV/AIDS. In addition, DFID will provide £5 million to assist the Government of China in developing its strategic capacity to deliver an effective and co-ordinated response to HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on progress in Africa towards a reduction in the proportion of 15 to 24-year-old pregnant women with HIV from 16 per cent. [148136]

Hilary Benn: UNAIDS will publish global HIV/AIDS figures this year, which will allow for a proper assessment of the progress towards this target. The Department for International Development will report on this in its next Departmental Report in 2004.

Meanwhile, the latest "AIDS Epidemic Update", published by UNAIDS in December 2003, reports that HIV prevalence in pregnant women in selected urban areas seems to show the following trajectories in recent years (UNAIDS "AIDS Epidemic Update", December 2003):

Increasing: Swaziland, Namibia, Mozambique, Cameroon
Stable: Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, DRC, Senegal
Declining: Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda.

The update concludes that we are not witnessing a decline in sub-Saharan Africa's epidemic. Significant challenges remain to arrest the epidemic and meet the target to reduce the proportion of pregnant women with HIV/AIDS.

DFID has HIV/AIDS activities in most of our 16 focus countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of DFID's interventions support National AIDS Councils and help to integrate efforts to address HIV/AIDS into a range of other sectors. In addition to direct HIV/AIDS activities, in an increasing number of countries significant, indirect support for addressing HIV/AIDS is being provided through budget support.

DFID has also invested £1.5 billion in supporting health systems since 1997. We are working with partners to improve maternal and child health and reduce the impact of HIV and other major communicable diseases.

The recently published "UK Call for Action on HIV/AIDS" (copy enclosed), makes clear our own commitment to significantly increase our efforts to address HIV/AIDS and poverty.

We will make reducing the vulnerability of poor people to HIV and to the impact of AIDS a priority for the extra resources the UK will be devoting to Africa by 2006. All DFID Africa country offices are currently considering what needs to be done, by those countries, to enhance their HIV/AIDS programmes, and how the UK and others can best help them, including through additional financial contributions.

The Government will also make HIV/AIDS—and Africa—a centrepiece of our presidencies of the G8 and the EU in 2005.

Human Rights (Sudan/Burma)

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with representatives of Amnesty International about the level and nature of human rights abuses in *(a)* Sudan and *(b)* Burma. [148126]

Mr. Mullin: I have been asked to reply.

I discussed human rights in Sudan with the Director of Amnesty International UK on 11 December 2003. We are in regular contact with Amnesty International on human rights issues in Burma. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials last spoke to Amnesty International on 15 January about their recent visit to Burma.

Infant Mortality Reduction

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what further action he proposes to take to help to achieve the goal in Africa of a reduction in under-five mortality rates for girls and boys from 158 per 1,000 live births to 139. [148138]

Hilary Benn: While some African countries have successfully reduced child mortality since 1990, in others it has changed little, and some African countries have experienced a rise in child mortality since 1990. It is generally accepted that a significant change will be needed if the target to reduce under-five mortality rates by two thirds by 2015 is to be achieved. Challenges include: the HIV/AIDS epidemic; economic decline and persistent poverty; inequality; under-resourced and poorly functioning health systems; and lack of progress in reducing the number of deaths of newborn babies.

DFID supports child health through wider work on strengthening health systems. We are actively supporting health sector development in 10 African countries, including working with partners to strengthen policy and action on child health. The UK will also continue to contribute to global initiatives such as the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and Roll Back Malaria, which have helped revitalise interest in childhood diseases and substantially increased the resources directed to child health. We shall continue to support implementation of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness Initiative with partners from the United Nations International Children's Fund, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development. This initiative is building the quality and quantity of child health care at country level throughout Africa. The UK is also part of the recently inaugurated High Level Forum on Health which plans to address systemic challenges to achieving the health related Millennium Development Goals.

In a range of countries we also have specific investments in sectors that contribute to reducing child mortality, for example in water and sanitation and in education. The UK's broader development efforts to enhance economic growth and address inequity, conflict, civil unrest, child rights and food insecurity can also be expected to have a positive impact on child health outcomes.

At all levels of our engagement with African partners, we shall be increasingly explicit that affordable and sustainable child health outcomes need greater priority in poverty reduction strategies, especially in those countries with high child mortality.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) if he will make a statement on progress towards the target of an increase in the proportion of births assisted by skilled birth attendants from 39 per cent. to 57 per cent. in key countries in Asia, with particular reference to Bangladesh and Pakistan; [148132]

(2) if he will make a statement on progress towards the target of a reduction in under five mortality rates for girls and boys from 92 per 1,000 live births to 68 per 1,000 in four key countries in Asia, with particular reference to India; [148133]

(3) if he will make a statement on progress towards the target of an increase in the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary school from 87 per cent. to 94 per cent. in four key countries in Asia, with particular reference to *(a)* Pakistan and *(b)* India; [148134]

(4) if he will make a statement on progress towards the target of an increase in gross primary school enrolment from 95 per cent. to 100 per cent. in four key countries in Asia; [148135]

(5) if he will make a statement on progress towards the target of a sustainable reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty from 15 per cent. to 10 per cent. in East Asia and the Pacific; [148140]

(6) if he will make a statement on progress towards the target of a sustainable reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty from 40 per cent. to 32 per cent. in South Asia. [148141]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: DFID's Autumn Performance Report (APR), which is available in the House of Commons Library, reports on progress towards all of Asia's Public Service Agreement (PSA) indicators. The APR also explains what action we are taking regarding off-track indicators. The following additional detail covers the country-specific issues.

China and India have made progress in increasing the proportion of births assisted by skilled birth attendants, but Bangladesh and Pakistan show little progress so far.

In Bangladesh, DFID is currently supporting the Government's national plan for maternal mortality reduction. We are considering what else we can do to help Bangladesh to make speedier progress, which might include giving earmarked funding to accelerate maternal mortality reduction or an increased budgetary allocation for this purpose. In Pakistan, where progress has also been slow, DFID is developing proposals for substantial support for accelerated actions to improve maternal and neonatal health.

There has been little improvement so far in reducing child mortality in India. To help respond to this challenge, DFID is supporting the design of the Government of India's Reproductive and Child Health Programme for 2004–08, which encompasses child mortality reduction. We intend to make a significant financial contribution in support of this programme.

The ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary school has improved in Bangladesh and China but in Pakistan and India, considerable progress is still needed. The Pakistan Government, in their recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, expressed a commitment to provide education for all through improved access to primary education. We and the other major donors support this commitment. DFID's current education programme promotes progress towards universal primary education and we plan to expand this support over the coming year. In India, which has made some progress, we are continuing to support the District Primary Education Projects in our partner states of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa. An integral part of this programme is the promotion of girls' education through a range of special initiatives and incentives. Enrolment, retention and completion rates of girls continue to steadily improve. We are also supporting the Lok Jumbish education programme in Rajasthan, which places significant emphasis on girls education. Emphasis on girls' education is also central in the new national strategy for universal elementary education, which DFID is planning to support with the WB and EC.

Iranian Earthquake

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many sniffer dogs in the United Kingdom were ineligible to accompany search and rescue teams to Iran on account of quarantine regulations. [147349]

Hilary Benn: There are 12 collapsed structure search and rescue dogs that are registered with the National Search and Rescue dog group. None were ineligible to accompany the rescue teams to Iran. However, seven had only recently completed quarantine following the earthquake response to Algeria last May and their owners felt it was not appropriate to subject them to another spell of quarantine so soon after that mission.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many sniffer dogs accompanied the search and rescue specialists who went from the United Kingdom to Iran on 27 December 2003. [147350]

Hilary Benn: Four dogs sent from the UK took part in the search and rescue operations in Iran.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what briefing he has received from the heads of the UK search and rescue teams in Iran since their return to this country. [147385]

Hilary Benn: DFID officials have been in regular contact with team leaders since their return from Iran. There will be a formal debrief meeting, as is standard practice on Wednesday 21 January.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many of the people described in his written ministerial statement of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 1–4WS, as having been evacuated to receive tertiary care in Iran have now received that care. [147386]

Hilary Benn: According to latest reports from the Head of the Disaster National taskforce an estimate of 12,500 people were evacuated by air from Bam to other centres in Iran. All casualties have been treated.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what his latest estimate is of the number of city officials in Bam who were killed during the recent earthquake. [147387]

Hilary Benn: The latest official Iranian Government figures estimate that 30,000 people lost their lives of which a proportion were city officials. Specific details of city officials killed has not been released. Meanwhile the Iranian authorities and the Iranian Red Crescent Society tracing department are continuing their assessment of missing persons.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate he has made of the number of unsolicited items provided by UK nationals to assist with shelter for people made homeless by the earthquake in Iran. [147388]

Hilary Benn: The Iranian embassy has expressed its gratitude for the tremendous response by the British public to the tragic situation in Iran. We cannot however, estimate the quantity of the unsolicited items they have been offered.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many of the people who suffered injuries in the earthquake in Iran have been *(a)* hospitalised and *(b)* treated. [147389]

Hilary Benn: The latest official Iranian Government figures give an estimate of 30,000 casualties that suffered injuries. Some of 12,500 people sustained severe injuries and were evacuated to other centres in Iran for treatment. The Iranian Red Crescent set up an extensive mobilised medical field hospital with four additional field hospitals set up by the Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Azerbaijan and Japan.

Iraq

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will list the humanitarian projects that the UK has *(a)* completed and *(b)* not yet completed in Iraq since 1 May 2003. [147166]

Hilary Benn: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for City of York (Hugh Bayley) on 6 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 238W.

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the Government's estimate is of the average *(a)* level of supply and *(b)* number of hours per day of supply of water to the population of (i) Baghdad and (ii) Basra (A) before the start of the recent conflict and (B) since the conclusion of the recent conflict. [147170]

Hilary Benn: Statistics in the precise form requested are not available.

Until the 1991 Gulf War, safe water was available to over 95 per cent. of the urban and 75 per cent. of the rural populations of Iraq. By 2000, coverage had dropped to 92 per cent. and 46 per cent. respectively. The deterioration of the system was disproportionately great in the south, including Basra, as a result of the discriminatory policies of the former regime.

It is estimated that as a result of the 2003 conflict and subsequent looting, water supply deteriorated by up to 50 per cent. in some governorates. Estimates suggest that the water supply network as a whole is now operating at about 65 per cent. of pre-war levels. However, significant efforts are being made to improve this situation.

In Baghdad, compact water treatment units and sewage pumping stations have been rehabilitated and additional units are being installed. Measures have also been taken to provide security at water treatment plants to prevent further looting. Hundreds of critical breaks in the water network have been repaired, increasing flow by 2 million litres per day. New construction is taking place at Baghdad's Sharkh Dijlah plant, which will add 40 per cent., or 2.25 million litres per day, to the water supply of eastern Baghdad by May 2004, benefiting 640,000 residents.

In Basra, rehabilitation work has already restored the water supply to pre-conflict levels. By spring 2004, the volume of fully treated water supplied to the city is expected to surpass the pre-war level of partially treated water. By the summer of 2004, the rehabilitation of the Sweet Water Canal, which supplies water to Basra, will have been completed, further benefiting 1.75 million residents.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will arrange for discussions with the Iraqi Provisional Authority about the supply in that country of safe, legal abortion services; whether his Department is prepared to contribute funding specifically for this purpose; and if he will make a statement. [147909]

Hilary Benn: DFID's main support to the health sector in Iraq is provided through the World Health Organisation (WHO). As part of their programme of work, WHO are holding regular discussions with the Iraqi authorities about the provision of all health services in the country, including family planning services. DFID has no plans to provide direct bilateral support for assistance in this area.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he is taking to ensure the safety of workers distributing aid funded by his Department in *(a)* Baghdad, *(b)* Basra and *(c)* elsewhere in Iraq, with particular reference to women aid workers. [148079]

Hilary Benn: The safety of UK personnel throughout Iraq is a top priority. Extensive measures are taken to protect DFID staff and consultants in their living and working quarters, as well as when they are travelling outside Coalition Provisional Authority compounds. These measures include the provision of personal safety and communications equipment, pre-posting security training and briefing and, where appropriate, armed protection. Security arrangements are kept under constant review. The same arrangements apply to men and women.

We are in close contact on security issues with the United Nations, which distributes a significant proportion of DFID's assistance to Iraq. We recently allocated £3 million to enhance UN security following the bombing of its Baghdad Headquarters in August and to replace equipment destroyed in that attack.

DFID also maintains regular contact with UK non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in Iraq, in which safety and security issues are discussed. Where necessary DFID provides additional funding to those NGOs which we are financing in order to enable them to enhance their own security measures. It is however for each NGO to determine for itself the level and type of security to put in place, according to the circumstances in which it is working.

DFID contracts with commercial companies allow for them to put appropriate security provisions in place. We expect them to adopt equivalent levels of security for their own staff to those we provide for DFID personnel. Security information is shared with these companies on a regular basis.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the level was of the UK contribution to the UN Oil for Food programme in Iraq. [148086]

Hilary Benn: The United Nations Oil for Food Programme was financed entirely from the sale of Iraq's oil.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what measures are being taken by *(a)* the UK and *(b)* the UK with others to prevent food shortages in Iraq; [148087]

(2) what recent assessment he has made of the level of food shortages in Iraq. [148098]

Hilary Benn: The Public Distribution System for food, managed by the Iraqi Ministry of Trade, provides a basic ration for the whole population. Since the end of the United Nations Oil for Food Programme in November 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) has become responsible for food procurement. Contracts already funded are expected to ensure that sufficient basic food will be available until mid-2004.

Significant levels of chronic malnutrition nevertheless persist in Iraq, mainly as a result of long-term poverty and the inability of many people to supplement their basic rations with food containing sufficient minerals and vitamins. A number of programmes are being implemented by bodies such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF and NGOs to provide supplementary feeding to vulnerable groups. DFID is providing support for such programmes, and also for the work of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in reviving agricultural production in Iraq.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what recent assessment has been made of the availability of medical supplies in Iraq; [148094]

(2) what recent assessment he has made of the levels of equipment at *(a)* the teaching hospital in Basra and *(b)* the Nuclear Medicines Hospital. [148096]

Hilary Benn: Work is currently under way between the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Coalition Provisional Authority and World Health Organisation (WHO) to develop a complete overview of missing drugs, supplies and equipment. This is expected to be complete by March. A great deal has already been achieved to re-establish drug and equipment supply systems. The initial focus was, rightly, on securing adequate supplies of the most essential medicines and vaccines.

Until new supply systems are fully operational, however, including comprehensive accounting and reporting processes to ensure that needs are identified before shortages arise, some problems will continue to occur. Even when these systems are in place, there may continue to be shortages of some highly specialised drugs and equipment.

The most critical contribution the international community can make is to ensure that the Ministry of Health can call on the technical expertise to enable them to prioritise their needs among highly competing demands. This is the nature of some of the support which the WHO has been providing, with DFID funding. We are also looking at possibilities for longer-term technical assistance to this and other key service delivery Ministries to assist with the budget prioritisation process, and to help ensure that they are able to access both Iraqi government revenues and donor funding.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the security situation in Iraq. [148097]

Hilary Benn: Despite continuing terrorist attacks against the Iraqi people, the international community and Multinational Forces in Iraq, the security situation is improving throughout the country as a whole. The majority of insurgency attacks remain largely confined to a limited area to the north and north-west of Baghdad.

Security problems are however still hampering humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, by way of sabotage of infrastructure and attacks on humanitarian workers and contractors. Several humanitarian organisations, including the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have withdrawn expatriate personnel from Iraq for security reasons. Many of their programmes are however continuing under the management of well-qualified Iraqi staff. We are offering NGOs working on DFID-funded projects in Iraq financial support to meet additional security requirements; and we have allocated £3 million to the United Nations to strengthen its security in Iraq and to replace equipment lost in the bombing of its Baghdad headquarters in August.

The safety of UK personnel throughout Iraq is a top priority. Extensive measures are taken to protect DFID staff and consultants in their living and working quarters, as well as when they are travelling outside Coalition Provisional Authority compounds.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment has been made of the supply of *(a)* clean water, *(b)* sanitation and *(c)* electricity in Iraq. [148105]

Hilary Benn: The most comprehensive assessment of the water supply, sanitation and electricity systems in Iraq is included within the Joint Iraq Needs Assessment prepared by the United Nations/World bank and available on the World bank website: http://worldbank.org

More recently the requirements of the various sectors have been assessed by the relevant Iraqi Ministries in conjunction with the CPA to develop the schedule of projects to be funded through the US Supplemental and managed by the Iraq Project Management Office and which are available at: www.rebuildinq-Iraq.net

Other regular and on-going assessments of the various service sectors are prepared by a number of agencies including:

Coalition Provisional Authority—www.cpa-iraq.org

USAID—www.usaid.gov/iraq

UNICEF—www.unicef.org

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with non-governmental organisations which have withdrawn from Iraq about the prospects of a safe return to the country to continue with humanitarian work. [148109]

Hilary Benn: DFID holds regular meetings with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in Iraq, during which security issues are discussed. A number of NGOs have reduced their presence and profile in Iraq as a result of the high levels of insecurity in the country. DFID has offered additional financial support to those NGOs we are funding in Iraq for appropriate increased security provisions, if needed, and a number of NGOs have responded to this offer. Even where some NGOs have withdrawn their expatriate staff, most existing programmes are able to continue under the management of very capable Iraqi staff, albeit sometimes with additional security constraints.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether the £60 million funding for his Department's expenditure in Iraq announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 9 April 2003 has been claimed. [148672]

Hilary Benn: The £60 million set aside by the Chancellor for Iraq is included in the UK's total Madrid pledge of £544 for the three years from April 2003. It is available to other Government Departments as well as DFID. £30.8 million has already been allocated, primarily towards meeting the costs of UK secondments to the Coalition Provisional Authority. The allocation of the remainder is under consideration.

Liberia

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of *(a)* the supply of clean water, *(b)* sanitation and *(c)* electricity supply in Liberia. [148106]

Hilary Benn: Clean water supply remains a major challenge, although immediate needs are being met. In urban centres, DFID has supported efforts to chlorinate shallow wells and, in sites where Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have collected, to provide safe water from drilled bore-holes with tankers, storage bladders and distribution networks. In rural areas, a major programme to rehabilitate wells and hand pumps is under way, with DFID backing.

Urgent sanitation needs are largely under control, since IDPs were moved from Monrovia to formal camps with established sanitation infrastructures.

Electrical supply has been virtually non-existent throughout the country for the last 15 years. The population has largely adjusted to this, and urgent needs, for instance in hospitals, are covered by generators provided and run by the humanitarian community.

Repairing and expanding the electrical grid system remains a significant mid-term rehabilitation requirement.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the security situation in Liberia and its impact on humanitarian relief. [148107]

Hilary Benn: The general security situation in Liberia remains stable, if fragile. However, while the number of UNMIL peacekeeping troops is insufficient to guarantee security across the country, the humanitarian agencies are understandably cautious in extending their activities beyond Monrovia; humanitarian operations remain restricted in scope, with only a few agencies implementing mostly small-scale activities in the more distant and insecure counties. In spite of this, the most urgent and acute humanitarian needs across Liberia are being met. Recent UNMIL deployments to Buchanan and Tubmanburg will, we hope, lead to the opening of UN sub-offices in these strategic towns, and a scaling up of humanitarian assistance. We understand that the UN is considering reducing the security alert level outside Monrovia from the current maximum level of Phase IV. This would also assist the spread of humanitarian programmes.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the levels of *(a)* food, *(b)* shelter and *(c)* medicine for the people of Liberia. [148108]

Hilary Benn: Given the extensive displacement of the population from their agricultural land, domestic food production in Liberia is inadequate, and will remain so in 2004. However, plans to feed almost 800,000 vulnerable people in 2004, which we propose to support, should provide sufficient food to avert extreme shortages.

With the large majority of informal settlements in Monrovia having been closed, and their occupants resettled to more formal camps, shelter for IDPs is considered by the relief agencies to be adequate, although temporary. The reconstruction of permanent shelters in IDPs' places of origin remains a major challenge for 2004–05.

With the reactivation of health services across the country, managed by international NGOs (with DFID support), medicines are in good supply in those areas where agencies are currently able to operate.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals in Liberia. [148122]

Hilary Benn: Liberia is just beginning a planned period of recovery from long and widespread destruction and collapse of Government services caused by civil war, corruption, and incompetent Government unconcerned to provide public services. Consequently, there has been no progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The National Transitional Government of Liberia, which has been in office only since October 2003, has agreed with the UN, World Bank and international agencies a comprehensive framework for post-conflict recovery over its two-year period of office. Its intention is to put in place, over this period, the basis for re-establishment of Government Administration and service provision that will subsequently enable progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Malaria

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much money has been given by his Department in each of the last six years *(a)* for medicines to fight malaria and *(b)* to research into affordable anti-malaria medicines. [148088]

Hilary Benn: The Department for International Development works closely with many partners to help developing countries accelerate progress towards achieving the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Goal VI is: by 2015, to have halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. Goal IV contains a target to reduce by two thirds between 1990 and 2015 the under-five mortality ratio.

The UK is committed to tackling malaria and contributing towards poverty reduction, in line with the MDGs and the associated Abuja Targets on malaria control. At the 1998 G8 summit in Birmingham the UK pledged £60 million in support of malaria activities, with £48 million allocated to Roll Back Malaria (RBM) over the period January 1999 to March 2004. RBM provides coordinated support for sustainable action against malaria. This includes providing technical support to Governments to ensure that their anti-malarial drug policies enable those suffering from malaria to get early treatment and to access affordable and appropriate medicines. As an active partner of RBM, DFID works to ensure RBM provides sound evidence-based support for the effective use of resources, including those available from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to which we have committed a total of US$280 million.

Within our overall spend on communicable diseases, we estimate that the amount spent on named malaria projects, including country programme and research spend, has been:

1997–98: £2,152,884
1998–99: £5,651,063
1999–2000: £13,882,671
2000–01: £17,372,874
2001–02: £17,280,357
2002–03: £18,892,095

DFID funds a variety of projects and programmes which work towards malaria control, including on the development and supply of anti-malarial drugs. DFID makes direct investments in research that covers malaria in several ways. Every year we give £4 million to the MRC through a Concordat agreement, which prioritises the needs of developing countries. Within the overall MRC portfolio, the focus on basic clinical research that can be used to identify new drug candidates includes malaria.

DFID also engage more directly in partnerships with industry to transform basic research, of the kind supported by the MRC, into drugs. We recently worked with GlaxoSmithKline, the WHO programme on Tropical Disease Research and Liverpool University in the development of a cheap new drug called LAPDAP(tm). In order to make the best use of this drug, further research to combine it with another drug to protect against early resistance is being undertaken, managed under an umbrella organisation called the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), which DFID also supports. MMV is an important and innovative organisation that brings together researchers from the public and private sectors, with donors and foundations. DFID is funding MMV with £1 million per year for five years. Since its inception in 1999 MMV has demonstrated significant progress towards reaching its objective to deliver two new drugs in the next 10 years.

Effective health systems are equally important if medicines are to be delivered safely. Many poor countries still do not have the capacity to deliver treatments for malaria in a safe and effective way, regardless of their cost. This is why we have committed £1.5 billion since 1997 to help developing countries strengthen their health systems.

Maternal Mortality

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what steps he is taking to meet the Millennium Development goals to reduce the level of maternal mortality among developing countries; [148083]

(2) what further action he proposes to take to help to achieve an increase in the proportion of births assisted by skilled birth attendants from 49 per cent. to 67 per cent. [148137]

Hilary Benn: I will answer questions 7107 and 7507 together.

Globally well over half a million women die in childbirth each year. A further 1.5 million women are left with a disability as a result of complications in childbirth and two million children are orphaned. The 5th Millennium Development Goal of improving maternal health has a target to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015. One proxy indicator of progress against this target is the proportion of births assisted by skilled birth attendants. This is reflected in DFID's Public Service Agreement Targets.

Improvement in the proportion of births assisted by skilled attendants has been a key feature in countries where the maternal mortality ratio has been reduced. Skilled attendance means the presence of a professional with midwifery skills, supported by the necessary supplies and systems. Also important is a functioning referral system, able to provide rapid access to life saving skills and procedures in the event of an emergency. The reality in many developing countries falls far short of this and most women deliver alone or with a family member or traditional birth attendant.

DFID is committed to reducing the toll of maternal death and to promoting women's right to a safe pregnancy and childbirth. The Department's strategy includes advocacy in the international arena, support to countries to strengthen health systems and improve access to maternal and reproductive health services, and support for research and improved measurement tools. Since 1997 the Department has committed approximately £1.5 billion to help developing countries put in place effective health care systems which are vital if maternity services are to be improved. DFID has specific bilateral programmes to promote safe motherhood in Nepal, Malawi and Kenya, which include work to improve access to skilled attendants with the necessary accompanying improvements in access to emergency obstetric care. DFID also supports the maternal health work of international multilateral agencies, including WHO, and international NGOs.

DFID is participating in a new international partnership for Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health and supports a number research programmes to improve the evidence base on effective interventions to reduce maternal mortality including the Initiative for Maternal Mortality Programme Assessment (IMMPACT) with the Gates Foundation, USAID and the EC.

Middle East

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what assessment he has made of the impact of *(a)* movement restrictions on Palestinians and *(b)* the construction of the separation wall on the access of children living in the town of Abu Dis and surrounding villages to schools and other educational facilities; [146552]

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of *(a)* movement restrictions on Palestinians and *(b)* the construction of the separation wall on the ability of people living in the town of Abu Dis and surrounding villages to visit hospital and other health facilities. [146551]

Hilary Benn: Abu Dis and its neighbouring villages on the eastern flank of Jerusalem are socially and economically integrated into Jerusalem. The construction of the separation wall, between the municipal boundary of Jerusalem and Abu Dis, will isolate Palestinians from their places of work, schools and health facilities.

Abu Dis provides only basic health care services. Movement restrictions and the separation barrier, will deny many Palestinians access to the nearest hospitals in Jerusalem. Schooling will be severely disrupted too. Currently many Jerusalemites send their children to schools in Abu Dis, and vice versa. The separation wall cuts through Al Quds University, which will lose one third of its land.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what assessment he has made of the preliminary analysis of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs published on 15 December 2003 into the humanitarian consequences of the planned route of the Separation Wall outlined in the map released by the Israeli Government on 23 October 2003; [146553]

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the preliminary analysis of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs published on 15 December 2003 into the humanitarian consequences of the planned route of the Separation Wall outlined in the map released by the Israeli Government on 23 October 2003 on the website www.seamzone.mod.gov.il. [146554]

Hilary Benn: I agree with the preliminary analysis on the humanitarian consequences of the separation wall in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report of 15 December 2003. The livelihoods of thousands of Palestinians have been drastically affected by the separation of villages from their agricultural land and water resources. The separation wall fragments communities and isolates people from vital social support networks.

I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses copies of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs preliminary analysis on the humanitarian consequences of the planned route of the separation wall, published on 15 December 2003.

Poverty Reduction

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what further action he proposes to take to secure a sustainable reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty in Africa. [148139]

Hilary Benn: The UK is committed to helping secure a sustainable reduction in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. The Prime Minister gave his commitment prior to the G8 summit in Canada in 2002 to significantly increase UK spending on bilateral programmes in Africa, and we are on course to increase the UK's budget for bilateral programmes in Africa, to £1 billion by 2005–06, (up from around £650 million a year in 2002).

We shall concentrate our resources in countries strongly committed to poverty reduction and on helping to end and recover from conflict. We will work to improve the effectiveness of UK and others' aid, by supporting country government systems and priorities. We shall continue to promote better coordination and harmonisation between bilateral donors and multilateral organisations on the ground.

The G8 will report progress on the Africa Action Plan during the UK Presidency in 2005. The Africa Action Plan expresses our political support for the New

Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The Prime Minister's priorities in particular include conflict, HIV/AIDS, primary education and trade.

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147593]

Hilary Benn: The present policy in DFID is to undertake our IT work in the most cost-effective and efficient way with a blend of "in-house teams" and outsourcing where appropriate. We have no specific policy about offshore outsourcing but keep the situation under regular review.

The Department for International Development has no call centres. We have not outsourced any of our IT work to offshore companies nor do we have any specific budgets to do so in the next two years.

We have over 60 overseas offices, some of which are co-located with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and we recruit local staff to assist with the maintenance of our IT systems as required.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Berçow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Sierra Leone and its impact on the provision of humanitarian aid. [148089]

Hilary Benn: Security is well-established across Sierra Leone. The whole country is under Government control, with the support of UNAMSIL. The Government's security agencies are developing their capacity in preparation for the withdrawal of UNAMSIL at the end of the year. The UK is providing extensive support to this process. The Government are currently carrying out a security sector review to put in place measures to guard against threats in the future, both internal and external. We plan to review our support to the security sector when the report of the Government's review is available, and will make modifications to our support as necessary, to assist with the maintenance of security beyond the departure of UNAMSIL.

There is no security restriction on humanitarian aid. Humanitarian agencies are able to operate in all parts of the country.

Somalia

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the status of the drought affecting the north-western regions of Somalia; and what assessment he has made of the impact which the drought is having on levels of malnutrition in the region. [147826]

Hilary Benn: A succession of failed rains over the past four years has resulted in large-scale food insecurity among pastoral populations in the Sool and Sanaag regions of northern Somalia. The UN Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU) surveyed the Sool plateau between 27 November and 5 December 2003, with preliminary results showing a global acute malnutrition rate of 18.9 per cent. and a severe acute malnutrition rate of 3.8 per cent. amongst children. Malnutrition rates among adult women (15 to 49 years) were 17.3 per cent., suggesting all household members are affected by the current drought. There is evidence of deterioration in the nutritional status of the population, confirmed by reports of collapsing social support system and a worsening drought after the failure of Deyr rains. Malnutrition rates appeared significantly higher among children from pastoral households than those in major villages. With no rains expected before April, further losses to livestock and other assets are expected.

Unfortunately the growing tension between Somaliland and Puntland, who both claim the drought-affected areas as their territory, could jeopardise assistance if the situation escalates into violent conflict.

Street Children

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much money is being provided by his Department to tackle the problem of street children in Russia in 2003–04. [148121]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: In 2003–04 DFID is spending £164,500 to tackle the problem of street children in Russia, of which £89,000 is committed under the project "Supporting Vulnerable Children in Ekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Oblast". The project purpose is to improve the quality of life for vulnerable children by providing family-focused, rather than institutional, care. The remaining £75,000 is committed under a number of small projects funded through the Health and Social Care Partnership Scheme. These projects include drug and alcohol awareness programmes for street children, activities to prevent homelessness and the development of foster care.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many street children there are in *(a)* Asia, *(b)* Africa, *(c)* Latin America, the Caribbean and the overseas territories and *(d)* the Middle East. [148129]

Hilary Benn: There are no internationally agreed definitions of street children and estimates of total numbers are unreliable and patchy. For all areas, numbers are therefore very difficult to assess.

For Asia I refer the hon.Member to the answer given by my hon.Friend for Harrow West on 15 January *Official Report* column 831W.

In Africa street children form a proportion of the 300 million people that live in extreme poverty (on less than $1 per day, figure relates to 1999). Across Africa we know that some 50 million girls and boys are out of school (UNESCO). Some of these will be street children.

In Latin America street children again form a proportion of the 135 million people that live in poverty (on less than $2 per day). There are some 2 million children out of school at primary level and some of these will be street children.

As far as DFID is aware there are no street children in the British Overseas Territories. There is no comprehensive date available for numbers of street children in the Caribbean.

The numbers of street children in the Middle East region as a whole is difficult to assess although UNICEF estimate that there are in excess of 1 million street children in Cairo alone. Where children are particularly vulnerable, for instance Iraq, UNICEF is undertaking research that will assist the government and international donor community efforts to meet their needs.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate he has made of the breakdown between public sector finance and private sector finance towards the costs of delivering the millennium development goals in sub-Saharan Africa. [148113]

Hilary Benn: Several estimates of costs of reaching the millennium development goals (MDGs) have been made using differing methodologies and assumptions about developments over the next decade. Uncertainties include how rapidly the policies of African countries might improve, how rapidly countries which have been in conflict emerge from it, how severe the longer term impacts of HIV/AIDS will be, and what impact shocks such as droughts might have.

Improved policies can make a big difference to the costs of achieving improvements in social indicators, but undoubtedly much more money is needed to achieve the MDGs. Both public and private finance has a role to play. Public expenditure is needed to help fund social services such as health and education, and the money for this can come from domestic taxes as well as from external aid. How much domestic revenue is generated depends on how fast the economy grows as well as on the tax system. Private investment, domestic and foreign, can help finance social services too, but also has the potential to accelerate economic growth.

More analysis has been done on how much extra foreign aid will be needed for the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa than on how much extra private sector money would be necessary. The aid estimates suggest that two or three times the current total annual inflows of $13 billion might be needed. The scale of this challenge suggests that we need to focus on four things. First, we should encourage African countries to develop sound policies for reducing poverty and the capacity to implement them, while continuing to follow prudent macroeconomic policies and to improve the environment they create for private investors. This will enhance their capacity to use aid effectively at the same time as raising their economic growth potential. Second, we should promote higher inflows of aid to countries with such policies. Third, we should seek to improve the quality of aid, in terms of its predictability and flexibility, for instance by directly funding national budgets. Fourth, we should work to make international trade and finance systems more supportive of economic growth and poverty reduction in low income countries.

Sudan

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the level of political stability in Sudan. [148091]

Mr. Mullin: I have been asked to reply.

Good progress continues to be made at the peace talks in Naivasha, Kenya. Both parties have now described the peace process as irreversible and they are hoping to conclude a framework agreement very soon. Although problems persist in some areas, and we continue to be very concerned about the situation in Darfur, there is, at last, a real chance for peace and stability in Sudan.

World Poverty

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate he has made of the number of people in the world living on *(a)* less than one dollar a day, *(b)* between one and two dollars a day and *(c)* between two and five dollars a day. [148114]

Hilary Benn: DFID does not produce its own estimates of the number of people living in poverty. This is a complex and resource intensive task. We use estimates produced by the World Bank. The latest estimates are that in 2000 there were 1.1 billion people in the world living on less than a dollar a day and a further 1.6 billion people living on between one and two dollars a day. A figure is not given for the number living on between two and five dollars a day.

More information on the analysis, including regional breakdowns, is in Chapter 1 of the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects 2004. This is available at: http://www.worldbank.org/prospects/gep2004/toc.htm

Zimbabwe

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development when he last met representatives of opposition parties in Zimbabwe; and when he next expects to meet representatives. [147344]

Hilary Benn: Since my appointment, I have not had any formal meetings with members of Zimbabwean opposition parties. Although I did have a brief conversation with the Secretary General of the MDC during his visit in November 2003. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and other FCO Ministers have had regular contacts with the Movement for Democratic Change, most recently during the visit to the UK of the Secretary General of the MDC. DFID officials also have occasional contact with representatives of Zimbabwean political parties.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with Amnesty International about *(a)* the level and *(b)* the nature of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. [148127]

Hilary Benn: The British Embassy in Harare is in regular contact with a number of human rights organisations operating there who are monitoring the situation on the ground. Embassy officials in Harare and in London regularly receive reporting from Amnesty International about the level and nature of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe, but have not met Amnesty recently to discuss Zimbabwe.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Art Acquisition

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much his Department has spent on the acquisition of works of art in each year since 1997, broken down by amounts spent on *(a)* paintings and *(b)* sculpture; what the single most expensive piece of art purchased by his Department since 1997 has been; how much it cost; and what the total revenue raised by his Department through sales of works of art has been since 1997. [142361]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: My Department has not purchased nor sold any works of art during the period since 1997.

Children's Rights

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills by when the Government are due to report to the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on what the UK is doing to fulfil the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; whether the Government have submitted this report; when this report will be made publicly available; and if he will make a statement. [147445]

Mr. Rammell: I have been asked to reply.

The UK has not yet ratified this Optional Protocol, so is not required to report on it. However, we do intend to ratify at the earliest opportunity. The UK will then be required to submit a report to the Committee within two years of the ratification coming into force, in accordance with article 12 of the Optional Protocol.

IT Contracts

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list information technology contracts in his Department and its predecessors with a value of above £20 million in each of the last 10 years; what the inception date for each system was; when it became fully functional; when it became fully debugged; and what the cost of over-runs has been. [146191]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: Neither the Department for Education and Skills nor its predecessors have let an information technology system contract in the last 10 years with a value above 20 million euros. A number of contracts for services have been let with a value above 20 million euros in that period and some of those contracts have included information technology elements as an integral part of the delivery arrangements. In no case has the implementation date of those contracted services been delayed by information technology problems, and consequently no costs have been incurred as a result of system development or de-bugging over-runs.

Jigsaw Research (Correspondence)

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much his Department has spent on the recent research conducted by Jigsaw Research into what customers think of the quality of the Department's replies to letters. [147413]

Mr. Stephen Twigg *[holding answer 14 January 2004]*: The Department's Strategic Framework Delivering Results-A Strategy to 2006, sets out a commitment to deliver prompt, responsive and consistently excellent services to our customers. The Department receives over 200,000 phone calls, letters and emails from the public every year. The recent research conducted by Jigsaw Research cost £18,000 and is our way of measuring the service we provide and identifying areas for improvement in our responses to letters, telephone calls and emails.

Office for Fair Access

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will propose an amendment to the Higher Education Bill to require the annual report produced by the Director of Fair Access to be accompanied by an annual debate on the floor of the House; and if he will make a statement. [148262]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 15 January 2004]*: We have no plans to make such an amendment. Members of Parliament are always free to seek debates in the House. We have also said that we will establish an independent review, working with the Director for Fair Access to report to this House, based upon the first three years of variable fees, and I am sure there will be an opportunity to debate that report.

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how the Director for Fair Access will safeguard fair access to higher education if top-up fees are introduced; and if he will make a statement. [148263]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 15 January 2004]*: From 2006, no institution will be able to charge higher fees without having an Access Plan approved by the Director of Fair Access. This will include details of the action they will take to safeguard access, including offering financial support (including bursaries) and running outreach activities. The Director of Fair Access will also have the responsibility for renewing and monitoring reports on the implementation of Access Plans.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what information must be contained in the plan that a higher education institution must provide to the Director of Fair Access in order to increase fees above the basic rate; and if he will make a statement. [148264]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 15 January 2004]*: An access plan must include the levels of fee the institution wishes to charge for its courses. We also intend, through

regulations, that an institution should include in its access plan details of the financial assistance (including bursaries) they will offer; how it will attract applications through outreach activities; how it will inform prospective students about financial assistance available to them; and set out its own objectives in widening participation. Institutions will also need to set out how they will monitor their compliance with the plan and progress against their objectives.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will break down the planned expenditure for the proposed Office for Fair Access by *(a)* salaries and staff, *(b)* office, *(c)* personal expenses and *(d)* other costs; and if he will make a statement. [148266]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer on 15 January 2004]:* We have said in the Regulatory Impact Assessment which we published alongside the Higher Education Bill that OFFA's costs will average around £500,000 per year. We will provide further detail in due course.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether the Office for Fair Access will continue the system of fining universities that do not meet their benchmarks for participation from under-represented social groups. [148569]

Alan Johnson: There is no current system of fining institutions because they do not meet their benchmarks and neither will OFFA do so.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) whether he intends to set a cap on the level of specified financial requirements that the Higher Education Funding Council for England can impose on universities breaking the terms of their access agreements; [148571]

(2) what notice the Director of Fair Access must give to universities under the provisions of section 35 (1)*(b)* of the Higher Education Bill; [148572]

(3) what estimate he has made of the average length of time that an access agreement between the Director of Fair Access and each individual university will last. [148570]

Alan Johnson: We intend to publish our draft regulations during the passage of the HE Bill which will provide information about access plans, and how the Director of Fair Access will operate.

Sign Bilingualism

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps his Department is taking to secure universal access for deaf children to Sign Bilingualism; and if he will make a statement. [147450]

Mr. Miliband: Last March the Government issued a position statement recognising British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right and announcing that it would make available £1 million for a discrete programme of initiatives to support the statement. A working group comprising key Government Departments and organisations for deaf people has been established to advise on priorities for allocating the funding. Tenders are currently being sought for work which will contribute to establishing a Great Britain wide framework to support the recruitment, training and deployment of BSL tutors and for work which will promote access for BSL users through awareness-raising amongst employers, service providers and in the wider community. The working group will also be considering strategies and policies which overtime will further increase access to BSL and will be making recommendations to Ministers in the autumn.

Parents of deaf pupils who have statements of special educational needs, are able to express a preference for the maintained school they would like their child to attend, and can also make representations for a place at an independent or non-maintained special schools. Before expressing a preference they are able to consider communication approaches offered by different schools—auditory-oral, total communication or sign bilingualism.

Sixth-form Budgets

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the budget for the teaching of A-Levels and equivalent academic courses in sixth-form colleges was in each year since 1996–97; and what the budget is for 2005–06. [147414]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 14 January 2004]:* The Department allocates funds to the Learning and Skills Council for the provision of A-Levels and equivalent academic courses in the post-16 learning and skills sector. The Department does not provide a specific budget to the LSC for sixth-form colleges. It is for the Learning and Skills Council to determine for itself the right level of investment in sixth-form colleges from the funds allocated to it for learning participation. Mark Haysom the Council's Chief Executive will to write to the hon. Gentleman providing details of the funds allocated to sixth-form colleges from 1996–97 to 2003–04, and provisional allocations to sixth form colleges from 2004–05 to 2005–06. A copy of his letter will be placed in the House Library.

Student Complaints Office

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what estimates he has made of the cost of providing *(a)* maintenance loans and *(b)* fee loans in each of the next 10 years assuming (i) current student numbers and (ii) expected growth in student numbers; [148564]

(2) how much annual Government spending on student loans will change in each of the next 10 years from the amount set out in the Higher Education Bill. [148566]

Alan Johnson: Information on the costs and benefits associated with the proposal in the Higher Education Bill to allow universities to set their own tuition fees is contained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment published on 8 January alongside the Bill. Because of the nature of a variable scheme, the costs vary greatly according to the decisions that both students and higher education institutions take, and they cannot be estimated precisely at this stage. Copies

of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the size of the total student loan debt was in each year since 1999; what the size of the increases in *(a)* loans taken out and *(b)* repayments of principal were in each year; what the increases from interest additions were in each year; and what the Government contribution to the student loan scheme was in each year. [147417]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 15 January 2004]*: The Secretary of State for Education and Skills has responsibilities for student loanspaid to higher education students domiciled in England and Wales, and this information is therefore provided on an England and Wales basis.

The table shows the student loans issued, repaid, the interest added and the amount outstanding at the end of the year for financial years 1999–2000 to 2001–02, and the change between each financial year.

£ million

England and Wales

	Financial year				
	1999–2000	*Change*	*2000–01*	*Change*	*2001–2002*
Lent	1,281.7	618.1	1,899.8	217.9	2,117.7
Repaid[1]	111.4	47.1	158.5	80.6	239.1
Interest added	69.4	32.1	101.5	44.1	145.6
Amount outstanding at the end of the financial year	3,413.8	1,889.3	5,303.1	1,900.1	7,203.2

[1] Amounts repaid cannot be split between repayments of principal and interest.

The resource accounting and budgeting (RAB) costs to the Treasury for loans to students domiciled in England and Wales are shown in the table:

Full details of student loans movements for England and Wales are included in the DfES resource accounts.

£ million

Resource Accounting and Budgeting costs *Financial year*	*Movement on Provisions*
1999–2000	558.9
2000–01	794.6
2001–02	855.9

Full details of student loans movemednts for England and Wales are included in the DfES resource accounts.

No figures have yet been published for 2002–03. Information for that year will be contained in the 2002–03 resource accounts which will be published within the next month.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when he expects universities to take on responsibility for the funding of the new student complaints office. [148565]

Alan Johnson: We anticipate that universities and other higher education sector institutions will be required, subject to parliamentary approval of the Higher Education Bill and designation of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), to fund the OIA from March 2005.

Teacher Training

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many bursaries for primary teacher training posts are to be funded from the Sure Start programme in 2004–05; [148167]

(2) how many of the additional initial teacher training places for primary teaching in 2004–05 will be eligible to receive bursaries; [148168]

(3) what plans he has to guarantee teaching posts to undergraduates who have received bursaries funded through the Sure Start programme. [148169]

Mr. Miliband: I announced last month that a minimum of 400 initial teacher training places would be made available in the 2004/05 academic year for trainees with an early years specialism. These are all places on Postgraduate Certificate in Education courses and will therefore in principle attract £6,000 training bursaries. An additional £2 million will be made available to the Teacher Training Agency to cover the costs of the additional places that will fall in the 2004–05 financial year. In view of the growing demand for trained teachers in early years settings, there is every reason to expect that suitable employment opportunities will be available for the trainees who are being recruited to fill these places.

Top-up Fees

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the amount of funding that will be raised for higher education in *(a)* 2006 and *(b)* each year to 2020 under (i) the present arrangements and (ii) his proposals on top-up fees. [148709]

Alan Johnson: The latest available estimates for fee income under the existing arrangements are for 2003/04: the total income from the standard fee of £1,125 is estimated at £847 million. Information on the additional income from variables fees is contained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment published on 8 January alongside the HE Bill. Because of the nature of a variable scheme, the extra income from fees will vary according to the decisions that higher education institutions take on the level of fee, both when variable

fees are introduced, and as universities' fee policies evolve in subsequent years. Copies of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

University Bursaries

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the average bursary that universities charging the full £3,000 will pass on to students from poorer backgrounds; and how many students he estimates will receive this bursary. [148567]

Alan Johnson: As a minimum, the Government want to ensure that no student who qualifies for the maximum state support (around 30 per cent. of students) has to take out additional debt as a result of higher fees. For a student on a £3,000 course, this means a minimum bursary/financial support of at least £300. But, as we have made clear the Director will expect more than the minimum from those institutions that do not have a strong record in access. For example, Cambridge University have announced that they will offer bursaries of £4,000 a year for the poorest students. Therefore we expect the average bursary will be more than £300 and more than 30 per cent. of students will benefit.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what powers the Office of Fair Access will have in the setting of bursary amounts in respect of universities that do not have strong records in recruiting students from poorer backgrounds. [148568]

Alan Johnson: From 2006, no institution will be able to charge higher fees without having an access plan which will include details of the action they will take to safeguard access, including offering financial support (including bursaries) and running outreach activities. The Director of Fair Access will scrutinise the access plans and refuse to approve any which are not satisfactory.

University Fees

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what total revenue he expects to be raised assuming *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 20 per cent., *(c)* 30 per cent., *(d)* 40 per cent., *(e)* 50 per cent., *(f)* 60 per cent., *(g)* 70 per cent., *(h)* 80 per cent., *(i)* 90 per cent. and *(j)* 100 per cent. of universities charge the full £3,000 fee, with the remainder of universities charging the standard fee of £1,200; [148573]

(2) what total revenue he expects to be raised assuming *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 20 per cent., *(c)* 30 per cent., *(d)* 40 per cent., *(e)* 50 per cent., *(f)* 60 per cent., *(g)* 70 per cent., *(h)* 80 per cent., *(i)* 90 per cent. and *(j)* 100 per cent. of universities charge the full £3,000 fee, with the remainder of universities charging the standard fee of £1,200 less the total amount spent on bursaries. [148574]

Alan Johnson: Information on the additional income from fees in different scenarios is contained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment published on 8 January alongside the HE Bill. Because of the nature of a variable scheme, the extra income from fees will vary according to the decisions that higher education institutions take on the level of fee. Figures for extra fee income, with and without the amount spent on bursaries, cannot therefore be estimated precisely at this stage. Copies of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Bush Administration regarding the role of the United Nations in Iraq. [148099]

Mr. Rammell: We are in regular contact with the US Administration on all aspects of the situation in Iraq, including the role of the United Nations. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Bush have repeatedly affirmed, we support the UN's vital role in Iraq, in accordance with the mandate set out in relevant Security Council resolutions. The future role of the UN will be discussed at a meeting between the UN Secretary-General, the Iraqi Governing Council and the Coalition Provisional Authority today.

Mr. Challen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British companies have won contracts to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq, broken down by type of service or project provided. [146960]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: We wish to see UK companies play a substantial role in the reconstruction process in Iraq. Several UK companies have won contracts to assist in that process but have asked us not to publicise their success because of commercial confidentiality. Furthermore, UK companies are not required to report such details to the Government. Therefore, we are unable to provide the information requested. However, UK firms are active in the power, water, banking, ports, construction, telecoms, security, legal services and consultancy services.

Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British technical experts are deployed *(a)* with the Iraqi Survey Group and *(b)* for the disarmament of Libya's weapons of mass destruction; and what the cost to date has been in conducting each mission. [147026]

Mr. MacShane: There are currently 55 British personnel (both civilian and military) deployed with the Iraq Survey Group. The costs to the United Kingdom of their mission are not recorded separately in a readily accessible form and cannot, therefore, be differentiated from the total cost of personnel deployed to the Gulf region as a whole. We do not have figures relating to costs incurred on support for the Iraq Survey Group by other Coalition Partners.

There are no British personnel currently deployed to Libya to assist with the disarmament of Libya's weapons of mass destruction.

Poland

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the number of people expected to travel from Poland to reside and work in the United Kingdom following Poland's accession to the European Union on 1 May. [147703]

Mr. MacShane: Research conducted for the Home Office by University College London (published in June 2003) estimates that the numbers of people who will migrate to the UK from the new Member States in the years following enlargement will not be significant. The University College London report is available on the Home Office website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr2503.pdf. The research was not broken down by country.

Visas

Mr. Crausby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the cost was in each of the last five years of the visa sections of *(a)* embassies and *(b)* high commissions and consuls, including the cost of entry clearance officers. [147787]

Mr. Mullin: Total global costs of running UKvisas operations for the years 1998–99, 1999–2000, 2000–01 and 2001–02 are published in the annual Foreign and Commonwealth Office Department Report, available in the Library of the House and on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website: www.fco.gov.uk. The latest published figure is £81.386 million for 2001–02. To break down the information further as requested by my hon. Friend could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Angola

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of human rights abuses in the Cabinda province of Angola; and if he will make a statement. [147792]

Mr. Mullin: We remain concerned about reports of human rights violations in Cabinda. We hope that a speedy and negotiated settlement to the Cabinda question can be found. Our embassy in Luanda is monitoring the situation closely in consultation with EU partners.

Bilateral Treaties (United States)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many bilateral treaties have been signed since 1 May 1997 between the UK and the United States, giving in each case *(a)* the date of signature, *(b)* the title and *(c)* information on whether the treaty is available for public inspection. [148867]

Mr. Straw: 14 bilateral treaties have been signed with the Government of the United States of America since 1 May 1997. Of these, 11 have so far been published, with the remaining three expected in due course. International treaties to which the UK is a party are published as Command Papers as soon as possible after they are concluded, and are widely available through The Stationery Office (TSO). All Treaty Command Papers published since March 2002, and their accompanying Explanatory Memoranda, have also been placed on the internet and may be accessed via: www.fco.gov.uk/treaty

The relevant bilateral treaties are:

(1) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the establishment on Ascension Island of an Additional Facility to be operated on Behalf of the United States Air Force.

Signed 15 July 1997 and 22 July 1997.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 049/1997: Cm 3739.

(2) Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning Maritime and Aerial Operations to Suppress Illicit Trafficking by Sea in Waters of the Caribbean and Bermuda with Exchange of Notes.

Signed 13 July 1998.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 002/2001: Cm 5031.

(3) Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on behalf of the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Government of the United States of America relating to investment incentives.

Signed on 20 April 1999.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 041/1999: Cm 4395.

(4) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the construction of a Monitoring Facility on Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory (British Indian Ocean Territory 1999).

Signed on 18 June 1999 and 21 July 1999.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 001/2000: Cm 4582.

(5) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America amending the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters done at Washington on 6 January 1994.

Signed on 30 April 2001 and 1 May 2001.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 008/2002: Cm 5375.

(6) Convention between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital Gains.

Signed on 24 July 2001.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 023/2003: Cm 5880.

(7) Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including the Government of the Cayman Islands, and the Government of the United States of America for the Exchange of Information relating to Taxes.

Signed on 27 November 2001.

Not yet published.

(8) Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including the

Government of the British Virgin Islands, and the Government of the United States of America for the Exchange of Information relating to Taxes.

Signed on 3 April 2002.

Not yet published.

(9) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America amending the Agreement done at London on 27 March 1941, and related lease and other arrangements regarding the establishment, use, operation and defence of the United States bases on Bermuda.

Signed on 18 June 2002.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 049/2002: Cm 5683.

(10) Protocol amending the Convention between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for the avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and capital Gains, signed at London on 24 July 2001.

Signed on 19 July 2002.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 023/2003: Cm 5880.

(11) Extradition Treaty between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America.

Signed on 31 March 2003.

Published as a Command Paper in the Country Series as United States No. 001/2003: Cm 5821.

(12) Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America regarding the sharing of Forfeited or Confiscated Assets or their Equivalent Funds.

Signed on 31 March 2003.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 034/2003: Cm 5946.

(13) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America to extend the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters signed at Washington on 6 January 1994 to the Isle of Man.

Signed on 2 June 2003 and 5 June 2003.

Not yet published.

(14) Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the use of Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island by Civil Aircraft not engaged in Scheduled International Air Services.

Signed on 1 October 2003.

Published as a Command Paper in the Treaty Series as No. 051/2003: Cm 6087.

Brazil

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Brazil about nuclear proliferation issues. [148466]

Mr. Rammell: We maintain a substantive and on-going dialogue with Brazil on the full range of nuclear proliferation issues at official level in London, Brasilia and at relevant international organisations and international fora. There has been no recent discussion at ministerial level on these themes.

Chechnya

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence his Department has of links between Chechens and *(a)* al-Qaeda, *(b)* Iraqi insurgents and *(c)* other practitioners of terrorism. [146686]

Mr. MacShane: Chechen extremists had close and long-established links to terrorists based in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. Some foreign terrorists who trained in Afghanistan, and had ties with al-Qaeda, went on to fight in Chechnya. Some Chechens fought with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against the Northern Alliance, and subsequently against the Coalition. Chechen groups even set up an "Embassy" in Kabul in early 2001. Those involved are subject to UN sanctions under UN Security Council Resolution 1267. Under the same resolution, the leading Chechen rebel field commander Shamil Basayev was made subject to UN sanctions on 12 August 2003.We have no strong evidence of Chechen terrorists being in Iraq. Some networks that support Chechen terrorism, however, may also support extremists in Iraq. Chechen extremists have developed links with a wide range of other extremists, including some in Europe, in order to fund and support their campaign. Some extremists see the conflict in Chechnya as a 'jihad' which they have a duty to support.

Cyprus

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent progress towards finding a solution to the Cyprus problem.[R] [148259]

Mr. MacShane *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* The formation of a new "government" under the leadership of the pro-settlement politician Mehmet Ali Talat in northern Cyprus is an encouraging development. So too was the statement last week by Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan. I was impressed during my visit to Ankara last week at the new positive line from the Turkish Government in support of the Annan Plan. I stressed in talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Gul the need for Turkey to support and work for the speedy acceptance of the Annan Plan with a view to finding a settlement that would allow a united Cyprus to enter the EU on 1 May this year. It is in the interest of all with a stake in Cyprus to work for a settlement by 1 May.

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he plans to make to *(a)* the new government in northern Cyprus and *(b)* Turkey over the need for a census to be conducted in northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.[R] [148260]

Mr. MacShane *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* We believe that the UNSG's proposals (the Annan Plan) satisfactorily take into account the issues underlying calls for a census. It is difficult to see the useful purpose that a census at the present time would serve, nor how the necessary delay in organising it would advance matters. I was impressed in talks with the Turkish

Government in Ankara last week at the new positive approach to finding a solution based on the Annan proposals.

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the outcome of the elections in northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.[R] [148261]

Mr. MacShane *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* I welcome the fact that a coalition "government" has now formed in northern Cyprus and that the coalition's stated aim is to work for a settlement to the Cyprus problem on the basis of the Annan Plan by 1 May. That is what the majority of the Turkish Cypriot population voted for on 14 December 2003. We continue to believe that the UN Secretary General's proposals offer the only realistic basis for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement. All sides must now commit to resume substantive settlement negotiations on the basis of these proposals as soon as possible, in line with the requirements set down by the UN Secretary General in his report of 1 April 2003.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147301]

Mr. MacShane: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has made clear the Government's position on EMU on many occasions in 2003. These included a speech on 23 October 2003 to the Chester/Ellesmere/North Wales Chamber of Commerce, which I am sending to my hon. Friend. In addition to published texts, the Foreign Secretary frequently answers questions on this issue during the course of all kinds of public discussions.

Germany

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason extra security has been put in place around the British Embassy in Berlin; when it was put in place; what the total cost of these measures has been since they were implemented; and who is meeting the cost of this extra security. [147682]

Mr. Rammell: Immediately after the attack on the British Consulate-General in Istanbul, all diplomatic missions were instructed to review their security urgently and, where appropriate, implement security enhancements. In addition, those missions with a high level of threat or vulnerability sought additional protection from the host government.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) cannot disclose, under Exemption 1 *(a)* and 4 *(e)* of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information the specific security measures in place at the British Embassy in Berlin but such costs would normally be met from FCO budgets.

Hong Kong

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Hong Kong. [148229]

Mr. Rammell: We continue to follow developments in Hong Kong closely, in line with our responsibilities as a co-signatory to the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary continues to report regularly to Parliament on the implementation of the Joint Declaration. The last such report (Cmnd 5864) was issued in July 2003 and is available in the Library of the House. We continue to assess that, generally, the "One Country, Two Systems" policy enshrined in the Joint Declaration is working well in practice.

The main political issue in Hong Kong is currently constitutional reform. The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) contains provisions on constitutional development, with the ultimate aims being the selection of the Chief Executive and election of all members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage. On 1 January up to 100,000 people participated in a march to call for greater democracy in Hong Kong.

On 7 January the Chief Executive announced the setting up of a Task Force, headed by the Chief Secretary for Administration, to examine the Basic Law's provisions on constitutional reform and to consult the Chinese Central People's Government on these issues. On 14 January the Chief Secretary issued a paper setting out the Work Plan of the Task Force. This makes clear that the Task Force will be carrying forward discussions with the Hong Kong people while consulting the Central People's Government on issues pertaining to the Basic Law.

When I was in Hong Kong in December I reiterated our position on this issue, that we hope to see early progress towards the Basic Law's ultimate aim of universal suffrage, at a pace in step with the wishes of the people of Hong Kong.

Imad Hage

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received during the last 12 months from Mr. Imad Hage. [145209]

Mr. MacShane: We have no record of any official representations from Mr. Imad Hage to the Foreign Secretary during the last 12 months.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings *(a)* officials and *(b)* Ministers in his Department have held during 2003 with Mr. Imad Hage. [145215]

Mr. MacShane: We have no record of any official meetings between officials or Ministers of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Mr. Imad Hage.

Israel

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli authorities in advance of the court hearing scheduled for 7 January, concerning the proposed demolition of the peace centre called Beit Arabiya in the West Bank village of Anata. [146561]

Mr. MacShane: None.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact of *(a)* settlement buildings, *(b)* movement restrictions on Palestinians, *(c)* planning regulations, *(d)* rules of residence and *(e)* construction of the separation wall on the extent to which Israel is fulfilling its responsibilities towards the character and status of Jerusalem under UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 267, 476 and 478; and what representations he is making on the issue. [146566]

Mr. MacShane: The Government have repeatedly said that neither side should take unilateral action that could prejudge the status of Jersualem. We regard the status of Jerusalem as still to be determined in permanent status negotiations between the parties. Pending agreement, we recognise de facto Israeli authority over West Jerusalem but consider East Jerusalem to be occupied territory. We recognise no sovereignty over the city.

We consider the building of settlements on occupied land to be unlawful. We have regularly called on Israel to fulfil its roadmap commitment to freeze all settlement activity (including natural growth of settlements) and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001. We have also urged Israel to improve the humanitarian situation by lifting curfews and easing restrictions on movement of persons and goods.

We understand Israel's need to take steps, within international law, to protect itself from terrorist attack. But we have made clear that we regard the route of the wall that Israel is building on occupied Palestinian land as unlawful. The decision to declare the land between the fence and the Green Line a "closed zone" and require those Palestinians who live on or farm it to apply for a permit to access their land is a matter of particular concern.

My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have raised these issues with the Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on a number of occasions. My noble Friend the Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean has also raised these issues with the Israeli Government in Tel Aviv and with the Israeli Ambassador in London. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have also made representations to the Israeli Ambassador, most recently on 10 December 2003.

Management Consultants

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the cost to his Department of using management consultants has been in each of the last five years. [148023]

Mr. Rammell: Expenditure on external consultants in general is reported annually in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) Departmental Report, available in the Library of the House and on the FCO's website: www.fco.gov.uk. Expenditure specifically on management consultants is not categorised separately and could be established only at disproportionate cost.

Expenditure on external consultants for the last five years has been:

	£ million
1997–98	15.8
1998–99	14.5
1999–2000	14
2000–01	17.9
2001–02	20.1

Expenditure for 2002–03 is not yet available, but will be included in the next Departmental Report due to be published in spring 2004.

The vast majority of our expenditure on external consultants is associated with our major Information Communications Technology (ICT) and Estate Construction programmes. Consultants also advise on legal, financial and personnel issues and provide support in areas where we have skills shortages. Increasing expenditure over recent years is largely associated with the growth of our ICT programme which is being used to support change in the organisation.

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147585]

Mr. Rammell: Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) purchasing policy follows the Government's Public Purchasing Consolidated Guidelines which require the procurement of goods and services to be based on value for money and that they should be acquired by competition unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

In the UK the FCO has not agreed any contracts for the provision of IT or call centre services operated outside this country, nor are there any plans to do so.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has received from Saudi Arabian officials concerning plans to attack British Airways flights *(a)* over Saudi Arabia and *(b)* with light aircraft registered in that country; and if he will make a statement. [148433]

Mr. Straw: We liaise closely with the Saudi Government on security issues, including those relating to aviation security. Information received in confidence from the Saudi Government is exempt from disclosure under Exemption 1*(c)* of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. We do not disclose the details of exchanges on security issues, as it is the longstanding practice of successive Governments not to comment on intelligence and security matters.

The security and intelligence agencies are outside the scope of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Paragraph 6, Part 1).

Sudan

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence has been collated by his Department on whether the Eritrean authorities are arming Sudanese rebels in the Darfur region; and if he will make a statement. [147774]

Mr. Mullin: We are aware of accusations made by the Government of Sudan of Eritrean involvement in the conflict in Darfur, and are in contact with both governments on this matter.

We hope that peace in Sudan will help bring stability and prosperity to the entire Greater Horn region, and are encouraging both sides to work to improve relations.

Sunset Clauses

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on the need for sunset clauses on legislative proposals brought forward by the European Commission. [147918]

Mr. MacShane: The Government believe that review clauses and sunsetting should be included in European legislation where appropriate. The Cabinet Office Guide to Regulatory Impact Assessment asks those officials negotiating a Directive to consider getting a commitment to review in the text of the Directive itself, if it is not feasible or appropriate to have sunsetting. The Cabinet Office Guide to Regulatory Impact Assessment is available on the Cabinet Office website: www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/scrutiny/ria-guidance.

Taiwan

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China. [147526]

Mr. Rammell: The United Kingdom monitors cross-Straits relations closely.

We attach great importance to the avoidance of conflict. We take every appropriate opportunity to convey to the Chinese Government and, through informal channels, to the Taiwanese Authorities our strong opposition to the use of force or to any action that raises cross-straits tensions.

United Nations

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions since 1975 when the vote cast by the United Kingdom has been diametrically opposed to that of the United States in the UN Security Council; and what percentage of votes this represents. [147399]

Mr. Rammell: The UK has made a positive vote in the Security Council when the US has voted negatively on the following 28 occasions since 1975:

11 August 1975: Application for membership for Republic of South Vietnam

11 August 1975: Application for membership for Democratic Republic of Vietnam

30 Sept 1975: Application for membership for Republic of South Vietnam

30 Sept 1975: Application for membership for Democratic Republic of Vietnam

8 Dec 1975: Situation in the Middle East

25 March 1976: Situation in occupied Arab territories

23 June 1976: Application for membership for Angola

15 Nov 1976: Application for membership for Socialist Republic of Vietnam

2 April 1982: Situation in occupied Arab territories

20 April 1982: Situation in occupied Arab territories

8 June 1982: Israeli invasion of Lebanon

26 June 1982: Israeli invasion of Lebanon

2 August 1983: Situation in occupied Arab territories

6 Sept 1984: Israeli occupation of Lebanon

30 Jan1986: Provocative acts in relation to Al Aqsa Mosque

1 Feb 1988: Situation in the occupied territories

15 April 1988: Situation in the occupied territories

10 May 1988: Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon

14 Dec 1988: Israeli raid on Lebanon

17 Feb 1989: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

9 June 1989: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

7 Nov 1989: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

31 May 1990: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

17 May 1995: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

7 March 1997: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

21 March 1997: Situation in the occupied Arab territories

30 June 2002: Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

20 Dec 2002: Situation in the Middle East

There have been no occasions since 1975 when the US has voted positively on a resolution which the UK has voted against. The 28 votes listed above represent around 2.3 per cent. of the 1,238 votes on substantive resolutions which have either been adopted or vetoed since 1975. In the same period, there were 23 occasions in which the UK voted positively and the US abstained, and 21 occasions when the UK abstained and the US voted against. There have been no occasions since 1975 when the UK abstained and the US voted positively, or the UK voted against and the US abstained. Exact figures for the total number of votes (including those, for example, on procedural issues) which have taken place in the Security Council are not readily available.

USA (Visas)

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the US Administration about the introduction of visa charges for British citizens who visit the United States of America. [148154]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: There have been no recent changes to charges for US visas for British citizens. However, we are in close consultation with the US on the introduction of biometric travel documents, and how this will affect entry in to the United States for British passport holders after 26 October 2004.

Western Sudan

Mr. Dawson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what measures the Government are taking to re-establish and support the Chadian-led peace negotiations following the breakdown of peace talks on Darfur, Western Sudan; [148015]

(2) what steps the Government are taking to encourage the Government of Sudan to agree to *(a)* the presence of international observers at peace talks on the conflict in Darfur, Western Sudan and *(b)* the inclusion of the Justice Equality Movement and militias at the negotiations. [148016]

Mr. Mullin: We remain extremely concerned at the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We are in contact with all parties, including the Government of Sudan at senior level, to press for the re-establishment of a ceasefire, preferably with international monitoring, which would permit humanitarian access to those in need and lead to talks about how the problems of Darfur can best be addressed.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of South Africa regarding the political situation in Zimbabwe. [147338]

Mr. Mullin: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed Zimbabwe with President Mbeki at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Abuja from 5 to 7 December 2003. We and our High Commissioner in South Africa are in regular dialogue with the South African Government on the issue.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Cannabis (Recategorisation)

16. **Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effects of the forthcoming recategorisation of cannabis in *(a)* London and *(b)* England; and if he will make a statement. [148341]

Caroline Flint: Cannabis is a harmful drug and it will remain illegal to produce, supply or possess it following reclassification as a Class C drug on 29 January. The presumption against using the power of arrest for simple cannabis possession offences committed by those aged 18 or over, following reclassification, will save police time and provide them with an opportunity to focus greater resources on priority areas like tackling Class A drug supply offences.

Fireworks Regulations (Enforcement)

17. **Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance has been issued to police forces in respect of enforcement of new regulations to control fireworks. [148342]

Fiona Mactaggart: The Department for Trade and Industry regulations prohibiting the possession of fireworks, in public places, by those under the age of 18 and the possession of category 4 fireworks (professional display fireworks) by the general public have now come into force.

The Home Office will be writing to Chief Police Officers shortly with details of these new powers.

Anti-Social Behaviour Act

18. **Ross Cranston:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the powers contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 on *(a)* graffiti and *(b)* fly-posting will be introduced. [148343]

Ms Blears: On 20 January we will be publishing a Guide to the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 which will give the dates when these measures will be commenced. The powers on graffiti will be commenced on 31 March 2004, those on fly posting on 20 January 2004.

Local Authority Finance (Police)

19. **Dr. Kumar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on increases in police precept by local authorities in 2004–05. [148344]

Ms Blears: Police authority precepts are a matter for each police authority. We expect all police authorities to assess their local needs carefully, taking into account local views on service and budget levels. We also expect authorities to exercise restraint in setting budgets and precepts as the current trend in council tax increases is unsustainable.

Police Budgets (East Anglia)

20. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet chief constables from East Anglia to discuss policing budgets for 2004–05. [148345]

Ms Blears: I have no current plans to meet chief constables from East Anglia. I have received written representations on the provisional grant funding settlement from Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. These will be fully taken into account in decisions on the final settlement.

The setting of budgets and precepts are matters for police authorities. We expect police authorities to ensure that their decisions will not place excessive burdens on the local council tax payer.

Child Trafficking

21. **Mrs. Ann Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will introduce legislation to combat the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children within the UK; and if he will make a statement. [148346]

Paul Goggins: The Sexual Offences Act 2003 includes offences which criminalise trafficking into, within and out of the country for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The offences carry a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment. The Act also introduces a wider range of offences covering the sexual exploitation of children. The Asylum and Immigration Bill includes a new offence of trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation.

"Reducing Crime, Changing Lives"

22. **Mrs. Brooke:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the plans contained in the report "Reducing Crime, Changing Lives" will be the subject of parliamentary scrutiny. [148347]

Ms Blears: The chief executive of the National Offender Management Service will be accountable to Ministers for reducing re-offending and delivering other agreed outcomes from the new service. Ministers will of course remain accountable to parliament for the service. Some of the reforms proposed in Reducing Crime—Changing Lives are likely to require legislation to be passed by parliament.

Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been arrested through powers exercised under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001; how long the detention lasted in each case; and if he will make a statement. [145076]

Mr. Blunkett: Individuals who are detained under Part 4 of the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCS) are not arrested. They are detained under Immigration powers pursuant to a certificate issued under Part 4 of the ATCS Act 2001, pending their removal from the United Kingdom.

In terms of numbers, I refer the hon. Member to my Written Ministerial Statement of 18 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 27WS. No further certifications or detentions made since then.

Under the other 12 Parts of the ATCS Act, Home Office records show that there have been 24 convictions under Part 5 (Racial and Religious Hatred) of the Act. Arrest figures for Part 5 of the Act and figures for the length of time each individual is detained are not held centrally. In addition, six people have been arrested under Part 13 of the Act (Miscellaneous provisions including noxious substances; hoaxes involving noxious substances; failure to disclose information about acts of terrorism and terrorist training).

Asylum Appeals

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to give a substantive reply to the question, reference 143845, concerning asylum and immigration cases heard in the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords, tabled by the hon. Member for Woking on 9 December 2003. [146843]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* I replied to the hon. Member on 14 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 754.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Chaytor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many failed asylum seekers were returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo in each of the last six years; and if he will make a statement; [144712]

(2) how many failed asylum seekers were returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in each of the last six years; and if he will make a statement; [144742]

(3) how many applicants for asylum there were from the Democratic Republic of Congo in each of the last six years; and how many and what percentage of applications were accepted. [145401]

Beverley Hughes: Estimates of the number of nationals of the Democratic Republic of Congo who had sought asylum at some stage and who were removed between January 1997 and June 2003 are shown in the table. These figures include persons departing 'voluntarily' after the initiation of enforcement action against them, and persons leaving under Assisted Voluntary Returns Programmes run by the International Organisation for Migration.

Removals and voluntary[1] departures of principal asylum applicants (excluding dependants): January 1997 to June 2003 [2,3,4]

Nationality	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*January to June 2003*
Democratic Republic of Congo	60	20	n/a	n/a	20	35	10

[1] Includes persons departing "voluntarily" after enforcement action had been initiated against them, persons leaving under Assisted voluntary return programmes run by the International Organisation for Migration, and removals on safe third country grounds.
[2] Figures rounded to the nearest five with * = 1 or 2.
[3] Data have been estimated due to data quality issues
[4] Provisional figures
n/a not available

Information on the destination of removals is not available.

Current advice from the Immigration and Nationality Directorate is that it is not safe to return nationals to the Democratic Republic of Congo other than to Kinshasa.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many and what proportion of asylum seekers in each country of the United Kingdom had achieved, prior to their entry into the UK, professional qualifications or their equivalent in *(a)* nursing, *(b)* medicine, *(c)* dentistry and *(d)* teaching in each year since 1997; [144818]

(2) how many and what proportion of asylum seekers in each country of the United Kingdom had gained prior to their entry into the UK *(a)* higher education qualifications or their equivalent, *(b)* professional qualifications or their equivalent and *(c)* secondary level qualifications or their equivalent in each year since 1997. [144817]

Beverley Hughes: Data on the qualifications which asylum seekers had obtained prior to entry are not recorded and collated centrally, and could therefore only be obtained from individual case files at disproportionate cost.

Information on asylum statistics is published quarterly on the Home Office website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his policy is on detaining asylum seekers with children whose application for asylum has been denied. [145677]

Beverley Hughes: After an application for asylum has been refused a family with children may be detained if there is a considered risk of non-compliance with the conditions of temporary admission or release, or to effect removal.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will provide a substantive response to the question relating to funding due to Kent county council in respect of asylum seekers, ref 144468, tabled by the hon. Member for North Thanet on 12 December and transferred to his Department by the Treasury for named day answer on 16 December 2003. [146557]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 January 2004]:* I replied to the hon. Member on 15 January 2004.

Cleveland Local Criminal Justice Board Website

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what date the Cleveland local criminal justice board website will contain some information. [146767]

Paul Goggins: The Cleveland Local Criminal Justice Boards website is currently under construction and will be populated with information by 23 January 2004.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Totnes of 5 November 2003 about the Totnes European School, acknowledged by his Department on 19 November 2003 (ref: M7244/3). [147070]

CPS

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Crown Prosecution Service's Racially Aggravated and Religiously Aggravated Crime Policy. [146246]

The Solicitor-General: The question has been passed to me for reply as the Law Officers are responsible for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

The CPS policy on racist and religious crime was launched on 14 July 2003 and was developed with criminal justice partners and in consultation with over 120 local and national groups, including representatives of faith and black and minority ethnic communities.

The policy clearly sets out the CPS stance on prosecuting racist and religious crime and emphasises the need to prosecute cases firmly, fairly and robustly. The aim is to contribute to improving public confidence in the criminal justice system and, it is hoped, to bring more offenders to justice.

In delivering training to underpin the policy, the CPS has involved members of the community and the police to assist prosecutors in understanding the issues and underline the impact on communities of such crime.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Crown Prosecution Service Merseyside Community Engagement Programme. [146247]

The Solicitor-General: The question has been passed to me for reply as the Law Officers are responsible for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

CPS Merseyside is heavily involved in a range of community engagement initiatives. These include talks to schools and colleges, mentoring students from the black and minority ethnic communities, and contributing to conferences arranged to obtain the views of a variety of community groups. Two conferences are scheduled in January. The Chief Crown Prosecutor for CPS Merseyside also arranges for representatives of relevant communities to address his staff during training courses so that they can describe the effects of crime on their lives and explain how the criminal justice agencies can better meet their needs.

The area is currently updating its community engagement strategy to draw together the initiatives in which it is involved.

Dangerous Offenders

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of sentences that *(a)* are poorly targeted and *(b)* do not bear down sufficiently on dangerous offenders. [147365]

Paul Goggins: Decisions on the targeting of sentences are for the courts, based on the full facts of individual cases. However, the Government is determined to ensure that sentences delivered are appropriate to offences committed. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 introduces a range of new sentences so that courts have a full range of options at their disposal in order to deal with offences and offenders appropriately.

These include the new Generic Community Sentence, which will allow judges and magistrates to choose specific elements (such as drug rehabilitation, unpaid work, curfew) that best suit the profiles of individual offenders and crimes.

The Act also enhances protection for the public from dangerous offenders. It introduces new indeterminate sentences for use where an offender is considered to pose a significant risk to the public. These sentences will ensure that an offender may be kept in custody for as long as he or she is considered to pose a threat to the public. If the risk posed decreases over time, the offender will become eligible for release once the period specified by the court as the minimum necessary for punitive purposes has been served.

In addition, to promote consistency in sentencing between courts, the Act set up the Sentencing Guidelines Council, an independent body chaired by the Lord Chief Justice. The Council's role is to produce guidelines for the courts on the most appropriate and best-targeted sentence for different types of offence.

Human Trafficking

Mrs. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of human trafficking were detected in 2002. [144611]

Beverley Hughes: Forming an accurate estimate of the levels of trafficking in people is problematic because of the secretive and hidden nature of the act. There are currently no accurate, reliable data in existence within the UK or the European Union. A Home Office research study "Stopping Traffic" (Police Research Series 125, published in 2000), indicated that there was intelligence to suggest that some women and children are trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This was estimated at between 140 and 1,400 per year but it was not possible to say how accurate this estimate is. The report concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that this was on a large scale in the UK compared with other European countries.

However, due to the very serious nature of the crime, in 2000, the Government set up a multi-agency taskforce called Reflex to co-ordinate the operational response to tackling organised crime groups involved in human trafficking and the smuggling of people into the UK. Since April 2003, there have been 14 significant disruptions (26 in total) and from these 37 convictions for related offences.

The Government have also introduced specific criminal sanctions covering traffickers. We have acted quickly to deal with the worst forms of exploitation by creating an offence of trafficking for the purposes of controlling someone in prostitution within the Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act 2002. More comprehensive offences concerning trafficking into, out of and within the UK for all forms of sexual exploitation are included in the Sexual Offences Act which received Royal Assent in November 2003. A new offence covering trafficking for forced labour and removal of organs is included in the Asylum and Immigration Bill, currently before Parliament. All of these offences carry a maximum penalty of 14 years.

Immigrant Surcharge

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his plans to introduce a £500 surcharge on immigrants to the UK includes those entering to study at English language schools; and if he will make a statement. [145139]

Beverley Hughes: No decisions have yet been made about the level of the fees. The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is required to provide a range of fees for indicative purposes only. The upper limit of that range, £500, does not signify that the Government intends, as some newspapers suggested, to set fees at that level.

The enabling power is the first stage of a two stage process. The second part of the process is to undertake a full Regulatory Impact Assessment and wider consultation with key stakeholders. Following this consultation, decisions regarding fee levels, scope and timing of introduction can then be made taking these views fully into account.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what percentage of immigration and asylum appeals before adjudicators his Department was *(a)* represented by Home Office Presenting Officers, *(b)* represented by Counsel and *(c)* not represented in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [143360]

Beverley Hughes: For the 12 month period to August 2003 the level of representation for Presenting Officers and Counsel when taken together was 72 per cent. This relatively low level of representation was caused, in large part, by difficulties in recruiting Presenting Officers, particularly in the London area. The level of representation will increase early in 2004 as up to 65 newly recruited Presenting Officers complete their training and take up their posts.

Immigration Control (Vehicle Checks)

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of *(a)* lorries and *(b)* other vehicles passing through Dover from France were not checked in Dover for purposes of seeking to discover illegal immigrants in the last 12 months. [142167]

Beverley Hughes: Approximately 2,500 lorries arrive at Dover every day on board cross channel ferries. Port authorities and operators in both Calais and Dunkerque check all lorries entering their port and again using UK supplied New Detection Technology (NDT) before lorries board ferries for the UK.

As it is clearly more effective to have searched lorries before they embark on ferries to the UK than on arrival at Dover lorries are selected for search by Immigration Service search teams only on an intelligence-led basis employing known profiles of vehicles used in people smuggling. Other vehicles such as private cars and vans are systematically checked in France by agents acting for the ferry operator.

Again, targeted checks by Immigration Officers are carried out on arrival at Dover.

Muslim Converts to Christianity

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded cases of *(a)* assault and *(b)* murder have occurred in the UK over the past five years of members of the Islamic faith who have converted to Christianity. [147424]

Ms Blears: The requested information is not available centrally.

Police Arms Recoveries

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* legal guns, *(b)* illegal guns and *(c)* knives have been recovered by the police investigating crimes in the last year. [146832]

Ms Blears: This information is not available in the form requested. The National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database launched in November 2003 will provide a central database of seized firearms and help trace guns used in crimes and improve detection.

Police Cells

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what the cost was of holding prisoners in police cells in 2002; [141643]

(2) how many prisoners have been held in police cells so far in 2003. [141644]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 3 December 2003]:* Prisoners are not routinely held in police cells as a result of overcrowding. When population pressures result in police cells being used, it is under an arrangement between the Prison Service and the police called "Operation Safeguard". Operation Safeguard has not been used since 2002 (between 11 July and 20 December 2002).

The average daily cost of holding a prisoner in a police cell during 2002 was £363 per person per night. The total cost of holding prisoners in police cells in 2002 was £10.4 million.

There are occasions where prisoners have to be accommodated in police cells because the escort contractor cannot deliver them to the receiving prison before its reception closes. There is an on-going arrangement with many police forces, known as "Lock-outs". These are entirely separate arrangements from Operation Safeguard. This arrangement is sometimes used to facilitate the return of prisoners to court the next day or when a court hearing extends into the evening. The average daily cost of holding a prisoner on Lock-out is currently £120 per person per night. The total cost for Lock-outs in 2002 was £1.356 million.

The total cost of holding prisoners in police cells under both Operation Safeguard and Lock-outs in 2002 was £11.756 million.

No prisoners were held under Operation Safeguard in 2003. There were a total of 982 prisoners held in police cells as Lock-outs in 2003. In addition, eight prisoners were held in police cells in the Greater Manchester area on the weekend of 7–8 June 2003, as an emergency measure, following a disturbance at HMP Whealstun, which resulted in a temporary loss of accommodation at the establishment. These prisoners were not held under arrangements for Operation Safeguard or as Lock-outs.

Police Time

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of a police officer's time on average was spent on *(a)* patrol and *(b)* dealing with paperwork in the last year for which figures are available. [146834]

Mr. Blunkett: Figures collected by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary show that, in 2002–03 the number of officers allocated to patrol duties was 63,426. However, we know that there is significant variation between forces in the amount of time officers spend on front line duties, including patrol. We are, as part of the Police Performance Assessment Framework, collecting data from forces so that we can publish a baseline estimate of front line policing for all forces. This will be a valuable tool to drive up the amount of time spent on front line duties.

We remain committed to tackling administrative burdens and inefficient practices in the police service. Sir David O'Dowd's Taskforce was commissioned to give the Government a police service view of what could be done to tackle the administrative burdens and inefficient practices which keep police officers off the streets. The Taskforce report, published in September 2002, highlighted ways of freeing up significant amounts of officers' time. Among the achievements to date, more than 4,600 forms in 21 forces are now obsolete and all 43 forces now have the capacity to undertake video identity parades. The national roll out of the fixed penalty notice scheme is scheduled for completion by April 2004. Other initiatives are contributing to the reducing burden on police officers. In addition, there is a major Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Thematic inspection on Civilianisation/The use of non-sworn staff due to report April/May 2004. £8 million has been set aside this financial year for workforce modernisation projects, the criteria for which include the release of officers for front line duties.

Prisons

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the total prison capacity has been in each year since 1997. [147356]

Paul Goggins: The annual average usable operational capacity for prisons in England and Wales from 1997 to 2003 is given in the following table.

	Useable operational capability
1997	61,900
1998	67,800
1999	68,100
2000	69,000
2001	69,400
2002	71,500
2003	74,300

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of prisoners in prisons in each of the next 10 years. [147358]

Paul Goggins: The most recent projections of the prison population are presented in the Home Office Prison Population Brief, England and Wales, April 2003

(issued September 2003). These present the four scenarios A, B, C, D for the short-term projection (up to March 2005) and the two central scenarios B and C for the long-term projection (up to 2009). There are no higher (A) and lower (D) scenarios for these long-term projections.

The projections are as follows:

Short term

	End of March 2004	*End of March 2005*
Scenario A	75,900	82,300
Scenario B	75,600	81,700
Scenario C	74,700	81,100
Scenario D	74,500	80,600

Long Term (as at end of June)

	2003	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*
Scenario B	73,900	77,000	82,900	88,000	89,500	91,100	92,400
Scenario C	73,700	76,200	81,500	87,200	88,700	90,300	91,600

Future prison population projections will take into consideration the impact of the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and proposals included in the "Reducing Crime—Changing Lives" report.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new remand unit at Winchester will be ready to receive the first prisoners. [147372]

Paul Goggins: The construction of the new remand unit at HMP Winchester is complete, and it is expected to receive its first prisoners in April 2004. This is subject to the installation of ancillary provisions such as new fences, reception, and gate entry systems.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders have been sent to Holloway prison in each year since 1997. [147373]

Paul Goggins: The number of young people held in Holloway prison at the end of June of each year from 1997 to 2003 is given in the table below. Young people are defined as those aged under 21, but may include some 21 year olds who were under 21 at conviction but have not been reclassified as part of the adult population.

Year	
1997	67
1998	57
1999	82
2000	85
2001	51
2002	70
2003	59

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what budget has been allocated to Holloway prison for young offenders in each year since 1997. [147374]

Paul Goggins: There are no specific budget allocations made by the Prison Service to cover young offenders (aged 18–21) held at establishments including Holloway prison. The total budget issued to each prison covers all inmates and makes no distinction between adults and young offenders. The juvenile estate (prisoners aged under 18) receives separately identified and monitored budgets from the Youth Justice Board.

However, it is acknowledged that there are additional funding requirements relating to young offenders because of physical security considerations and educational needs. It is the responsibility of the Governor of each establishment and the Area Manager to determine how these requirements are met out of the total budget available.

The Prison Service's Annual Report and Accounts for 2002/03, printed on 15 July 2003, contains details of the costs of all prison establishments including those holding young offenders.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers were serving at each *(a)* prison and *(b)* remand centre, disaggregated by sex, in each year since 1997. [147375]

Paul Goggins: The information available is contained in the following tables. The figures include prison officers, senior officers and principal officers. Information on officer numbers broken down by gender and location is not available prior to March 1998.

In those establishments which hold both remand and convicted prisoners, it is not possible to disaggregate the staffing numbers attached to each. The data represents a snapshot staffing level on the date of data capture. It does not take account of new staff who were in the recruitment process at that time. Staffing levels in prison establishments can be affected by a number of factors, including, for example, prisoner numbers, the opening of new accommodation, the temporary closure of accommodation for refurbishment, change to role and function, and changes to working practices.

Officer numbers by establishment and gender 31 March 1998 to 31 December 2003

Establishment	*31–03–98*		*30–11–98*		*31–12–99*		*31–12–2000*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Acklington	203	9	178	3	211	9	205	9
Aldington	42	3	39	3	—	—	—	—
Albany	156	7	161	7	150	6	144	4
Ashwell	103	15	101	10	101	16	96	14
Askham Grange	7	23	80	20	8	21	8	21

Officer numbers by establishment and gender 31 March 1998 to 31 December 2003

Establishment	31-03-98		30-11-98		31-12-99		31-12-2000	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Aylesbury	174	18	148	14	160	22	144	28
Bedford	158	14	162	8	145	18	147	17
Belmarsh	475	77	464	66	456	86	433	94
Birmingham	310	28	319	28	318	33	300	29
Blakenhurst	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blantyre House	30	3	31	3	33	2	30	3
Blundeston	156	8	157	7	151	8	156	8
Brinsford	154	37	160	37	171	41	178	39
Bristol	298	27	298	24	281	28	270	33
Brixton	288	50	281	37	272	54	253	50
Brockhill	54	32	58	25	52	40	50	43
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	—	—	—	72	40
Bullingdon	199	53	205	41	205	48	200	55
Bullwood Hall	24	53	22	48	27	54	25	52
Camp Hill	146	8	146	8	148	10	139	11
Canterbury	127	5	129	4	122	6	118	4
Cardiff	241	8	234	8	232	9	226	9
Castington	155	10	127	3	177	21	190	23
Channings Wood	141	14	141	14	134	17	137	19
Chelmsford	171	15	170	15	171	19	171	29
Coldingley	90	7	89	10	89	9	84	9
Cookham Wood	16	39	15	39	13	41	12	43
Dartmoor	246	12	242	10	237	12	227	13
Deerbolt	153	9	145	6	151	10	144	11
Dorchester	79	9	79	9	77	10	78	9
Dover[1]	105	6	108	4	111	5	107	8
Downview	101	21	103	19	101	24	100	24
Drake Hall	14	49	14	48	16	47	20	45
Durham	357	77	361	59	350	76	359	77
East Sutton Park	8	16	7	15	6	18	4	19
Eastwood Park	36	63	36	56	42	80	36	75
Edmunds Hill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Elmley	229	47	224	40	230	49	230	55
Erlestoke	91	4	89	4	95	4	95	7
Everthorpe	121	10	120	9	125	11	122	9
Exeter	183	7	182	6	175	10	167	12
Featherstone	143	13	143	13	145	14	140	12
Feltham	290	50	297	42	282	59	324	63
Ford	60	3	61	1	60	4	58	5
Foston Hall	17	43	18	37	21	47	26	59
Frankland	435	57	411	50	458	58	445	53
Full Sutton	447	55	442	48	451	50	448	60
Garth	222	32	222	32	222	34	216	37
Gartree	136	18	140	14	138	16	137	17
Glen Parva	256	16	278	18	259	26	253	24
Gloucester	122	11	122	11	120	11	122	11
Grendon	158	38	127	35	132	38	133	42
Guys Marsh	112	14	109	12	113	18	113	18
Haslar[1]	47	3	46	2	47	3	45	4
Hatfield	47	2	52	1	44	2	42	3
Haverigg	126	22	126	18	115	20	113	23
Hewell Grange	26	1	27	1	25	2	26	2
High Down	330	68	254	53	238	55	240	61
Highpoint	169	1	162	56	178	59	176	67
Hindley	193	21	195	18	196	21	192	22
Hollesley Bay	139	4	147	4	129	5	143	13
Holloway	82	219	84	215	71	225	72	213
Holme House	278	35	280	32	276	32	277	32
Hull	243	14	243	11	228	20	224	16
Huntercombe	120	18	100	16	121	24	123	35
Kingston	72	2	73	2	72	5	69	5
Kirkham	77	7	79	8	79	7	80	6
Kirklevington Grange	42	2	40	2	38	2	36	1
Lancaster	83	5	84	4	84	6	84	6
Lancaster Farms	164	21	164	18	172	26	178	27
Latchmere House	32	6	29	8	34	7	32	5
Leeds	399	47	400	43	396	52	389	50
Leicester	164	15	171	12	148	12	143	15
Lewes	193	14	196	14	194	12	184	12
Leyhill	63	7	66	5	60	11	57	11

Officer numbers by establishment and gender 31 March 1998 to 31 December 2003

Establishment	31-03-98		30-11-98		31-12-99		31-12-2000	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lincoln	225	9	230	8	220	13	216	11
Lindholme	170	8	170	8	168	10	177	16
Littlehey	148	16	150	12	143	22	137	23
Liverpool	537	48	545	43	545	53	519	51
Long Lartin	355	51	322	32	349	58	344	64
Low Newton	86	45	98	22	63	60	60	61
Maidstone	172	22	178	23	173	20	169	21
Manchester	504	75	510	69	486	75	457	70
Moorland	240	32	239	31	238	34	232	37
Morton Hall	32	—	30	1	30	—	31	25
New Hall	49	86	45	82	45	86	44	97
North Sea Camp	29	3	31	2	28	4	29	4
Northallerton	77	10	80	12	75	9	77	11
Norwich	220	25	218	24	213	30	216	27
Nottingham	166	12	157	9	165	13	164	14
Onley	187	21	179	21	197	36	197	40
Parkhurst	189	15	193	14	186	13	189	16
Pentonville	335	52	336	50	323	45	319	59
Portland	157	5	155	5	154	12	165	14
Preston	271	15	278	16	269	16	255	16
Ranby	189	17	151	13	188	20	189	19
Reading	116	15	112	9	112	16	115	14
Risley	240	79	261	100	227	70	221	71
Rochester	143	14	151	14	154	18	151	18
Send	22	47	51	7	24	41	30	43
Shepton Mallet	66	5	68	4	70	4	68	4
Shrewsbury	114	9	112	9	111	9	109	11
Stafford	188	14	191	13	175	16	173	16
Standford Hill	81	4	66	4	79	4	73	6
Stocken	127	13	115	9	128	16	128	13
Stoke Heath	153	25	157	28	173	33	184	35
Styal	62	111	38	78	72	114	69	107
Sudbury	64	3	64	3	65	3	63	3
Swaleside	168	42	186	34	187	52	191	51
Swansea	127	4	127	4	126	6	122	7
Swinfen Hall	116	12	111	11	120	15	116	14
The Mount	117	22	115	21	133	27	130	32
The Verne	123	5	124	5	125	6	117	6
Thorn Cross	92	13	93	13	98	15	100	16
Usk/Prescoed	80	3	81	4	83	2	84	3
Wakefield	374	17	386	16	361	21	352	24
Wandsworth	368	67	343	43	365	66	354	69
Warren Hill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wayland	138	12	136	12	139	18	130	19
Wealstun	131	16	135	15	132	18	129	19
Weare	109	15	110	15	112	13	113	14
Wellingborough	98	15	93	17	128	34	120	33
Werrington	75	8	67	5	73	10	69	11
Wetherby	126	21	124	23	130	25	128	24
Whatton	71	5	70	5	73	6	65	6
Whitemoor	416	70	421	59	389	62	409	69
Winchester	194	23	218	31	188	25	186	25
Woodhill	351	81	349	74	342	85	345	100
Wormwood Scrubs	335	54	347	53	300	50	300	56
Wymott	190	28	202	27	188	30	181	32
Establishments total	20,641	3,276	20,460	2,885	20,329	3,516	20,128	3,747

Establishment	31-12-01		31-12-02		31-12-03	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Acklington	196	10	185	12	205	22
Aldington	—	—	—	—	—	—
Albany	141	4	134	6	139	9
Ashwell	89	12	86	15	92	19
Askham Grange	8	20	5	24	6	26
Aylesbury	136	30	139	29	126	33
Bedford	128	16	113	16	115	19
Belmarsh	422	98	418	94	424	97
Birmingham	268	23	285	30	424	70
Blakenhurst	139	33	124	38	133	45

Establishment	31–12–01 Male	31–12–01 Female	31–12–02 Male	31–12–02 Female	31–12–03 Male	31–12–03 Female
Blantyre House	31	3	32	3	30	4
Blundeston	149	8	141	9	137	12
Brinsford	186	42	188	45	181	50
Bristol	261	31	251	31	233	31
Brixton	221	47	201	42	194	36
Brockhill	47	44	46	50	47	52
Buckley Hall	67	36	61	46	52	53
Bullingdon	187	55	165	61	163	56
Bullwood Hall	21	52	21	55	24	58
Camp Hill	139	11	135	12	135	14
Canterbury	115	6	111	8	102	8
Cardiff	216	9	219	12	223	16
Castington	190	23	183	23	177	24
Channings Wood	134	19	141	20	144	23
Chelmsford	163	30	164	32	152	28
Coldingley	83	10	80	14	81	13
Cookham Wood	11	39	11	40	13	48
Dartmoor	211	12	188	9	161	9
Deerbolt	134	9	144	14	159	16
Dorchester	74	9	74	8	82	5
Dover[1]	101	8	105	5	105	5
Downview	69	31	38	60	47	59
Drake Hall	20	54	21	67	23	69
Durham	340	77	341	77	331	84
East Sutton Park	4	20	6	18	4	21
Eastwood Park	39	77	36	79	46	81
Edmunds Hill	36	50	34	49	39	85
Elmley	214	55	218	58	197	52
Erlestoke	86	7	87	12	97	20
Everthorpe	110	9	104	11	113	13
Exeter	163	12	161	13	169	22
Featherstone	126	11	132	11	125	14
Feltham	296	52	308	66	348	91
Ford	56	5	56	6	55	8
Foston Hall	23	57	25	64	20	81
Frankland	429	50	427	50	456	56
Full Sutton	427	58	439	61	428	64
Garth	197	37	191	39	186	40
Gartree	128	16	120	19	123	26
Glen Parva	243	22	238	25	232	27
Gloucester	110	12	105	19	97	24
Grendon	126	37	107	41	119	43
Guys Marsh	113	19	111	32	113	29
Haslar[1]	41	4	38	8	43	8
Hatfield	35	4	—	—	—	—
Haverigg	106	24	101	25	103	28
Hewell Grange	24	4	24	4	25	5
High Down	225	54	211	52	166	53
Highpoint	131	14	138	22	165	13
Hindley	219	29	233	33	222	34
Hollesley Bay	147	14	159	20	42	3
Holloway	69	195	79	169	100	195
Holme House	275	30	279	31	269	36
Hull	223	19	297	41	300	44
Huntercombe	112	35	129	43	116	34
Kingston	63	8	63	10	62	11
Kirkham	77	8	78	8	81	13
Kirklevington Grange	36	1	39	3	42	4
Lancaster	80	6	77	6	71	13
Lancaster Farms	167	27	172	30	185	39
Latchmere House	34	5	32	4	34	4
Leeds	356	49	366	61	359	67
Leicester	126	13	110	13	118	19
Lewes	163	12	159	14	159	13
Leyhill	53	11	55	9	57	11
Lincoln	206	11	205	10	201	13
Lindholme	160	15	175	19	177	20
Littlehey	130	23	124	21	128	25
Liverpool	481	47	469	43	431	32

Establishment	31–12–01 Male	31–12–01 Female	31–12–02 Male	31–12–02 Female	31–12–03 Male	31–12–03 Female
Long Lartin	321	63	307	62	301	65
Low Newton	57	62	55	71	58	88
Maidstone	163	22	166	28	134	25
Manchester	360	60	355	60	352	71
Moorland	243	38	290	49	290	47
Morton Hall	26	44	34	76	37	80
New Hall	51	103	64	112	70	110
North Sea Camp	30	5	36	5	34	7
Northallerton	61	8	58	9	55	9
Norwich	207	23	206	26	200	27
Nottingham	161	15	157	14	164	19
Onley	191	33	182	39	184	42
Parkhurst	182	16	174	17	173	20
Pentonville	301	59	303	73	311	78
Portland	165	12	153	10	153	18
Preston	233	17	227	18	221	22
Ranby	194	21	202	24	201	29
Reading	115	11	97	13	95	15
Risley	209	65	218	65	223	72
Rochester	139	17	118	23	109	24
Send	29	40	25	36	26	43
Shepton Mallet	58	4	59	6	58	7
Shrewsbury	101	11	96	9	96	13
Stafford	163	14	156	14	150	18
Standford Hill	72	7	69	11	76	17
Stocken	127	12	127	14	136	18
Stoke Heath	193	35	190	37	198	34
Styal	67	109	57	108	58	121
Sudbury	61	1	62	1	63	6
Swaleside	187	50	192	44	190	48
Swansea	119	7	118	7	122	10
Swinfen Hall	114	12	104	16	99	19
The Mount	120	32	112	38	110	38
The Verne	115	8	110	8	106	6
Thorn Cross	98	19	86	19	88	17
Usk/Prescoed	85	3	83	5	85	5
Wakefield	341	21	348	27	340	35
Wandsworth	323	61	315	67	309	67
Warren Hill	—	—	—	—	121	21
Wayland	124	19	132	20	125	26
Wealstun	128	15	134	19	140	21
Weare	106	17	101	17	99	20
Wellingborough	124	33	108	35	108	33
Werrington	66	12	69	10	68	13
Wetherby	128	22	130	30	136	28
Whatton	64	7	81	8	80	9
Whitemoor	417	66	407	63	412	70
Winchester	178	32	176	32	172	42
Woodhill	322	91	317	96	345	92
Wormwood Scrubs	278	49	252	45	247	58
Wymott	175	29	172	28	187	38
Establishments total	19,254	3,713	19,057	4,043	19,198	4,508

[1] Immigration detention centre.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average length of service at any one prison is of current prison governors. [147419]

Paul Goggins: Since January 1999 the average length of tenure across the Service of a Governor in charge of a public sector prison establishment has been 1.9 years. Decisions on the appointment of Governors in HM Prison Service are taken by senior operational managers in the light of operational need.

Shoplifting

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences of shoplifting were recorded in each criminal justice area in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available. [144580]

Paul Goggins: There were 309,397 recorded offences of thefts from shops in England and Wales in the year ending March 2003.

Victim/Witness Support

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support his Department gives to *(a)* victim support and *(b)* witness support in (i) England and Wales and (ii) Gloucestershire. [144018]

Paul Goggins: Between 1996–97 and 2002–03 the Home Office's funding of the organisation Victim Support, which provides support to both victims and witnesses, more than doubled, from £11.7 million to £29.3 million. This year our grant in aid to Victim

Support has been increased to £30 million, which represents an increase of 2.4 per cent. Of this, over £26 million will be passed on to local Victim Support schemes, with the balance being used by the Victim Support National Office to provide, amongst other things, a range of central services to its member groups.

The Victim Support Area of Gloucestershire has been allocated a total of £265,498 by Victim Support National Office under their new Funding Formula for the year 2003–04. As well as providing funding to Victim Support, the Home Office also provides £572,000 to other organisations supporting victims and witnesses of crime.

Young Offenders

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions members of Independent Monitoring Boards have refused to sign off a child being held in a segregation unit in each young offender institution. [144365]

Paul Goggins: This information is not held centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Assembly Elections

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of levels of voter turnout at the recent Assembly elections; what research he intends to commission to study the reasons for this; and what measures he is considering adopting to improve turnout. [147532]

Mr. Spellar: The turnout for the 2003 Assembly election was 63.1 per cent., which compares to a figure of 68.8 per cent. for the previous Assembly election in 1998.

The Electoral Commission, which has responsibility for promoting public awareness of electoral matters, held a one-day seminar on the 7 January to hear views from stakeholders about the administration of the Assembly election. The public have also been invited to contact the Commission with their views on the election.

I understand that the Commission intends to publish a report on the election before the end of April 2004. The report will cover all aspects of the recent election including voter turnout. The Government will study the report carefully when it is received.

Criminal Justice Act

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the minimum sentence for the murder of *(a)* a prison officer and *(b)* a police officer on duty in Northern Ireland is; and if he will make a statement on the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. [147574]

Mr. Spellar: The mandatory sentence for murder is life imprisonment. Under the provisions of the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001, the determination of the appropriate minimum period or tariff, which any life sentence prisoner in Northern Ireland must serve in custody before consideration can be given to release, is a matter for judicial discretion. The sentencing judge can set a tariff for a fixed period of years or determine that a whole life tariff would be more appropriate in individual cases.

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 introduced in England and Wales a new statutory framework providing for four different starting-points for the judicial determination of minimum terms in mandatory life sentence cases. That framework provides for an initial starting point of 30 years for a person convicted of the murder of a police or prison officer in the course of their duty in England and Wales. Those statutory starting-points may be adjusted upwards or downwards by the sentencing judge, having regard to any relevant aggravating or mitigating factors in the case, to arrive at the minimum term which must be served by the prisoner. On 8 January, I published a consultation paper seeking views on the appropriateness of adopting a similar framework for mandatory life sentences in Northern Ireland. The consultation period extends to 31 March, after which responses will be carefully evaluated and the outcome of the consultation published.

Decommissioning

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reports he has received regarding the treatment of General John de Chastelain during the decommissioning act in Northern Ireland on 20 October 2003; and if he will make a statement. [148469]

Jane Kennedy: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has received no reports regarding the treatment of General de Chastelain during the decommissioning act in October 2003.

Dementia Services

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans to review dementia services in Northern Ireland. [148775]

Angela Smith: My Department recognises the need to review the policy in relation to people with dementia. Dementia services will therefore be included in the on-going review of mental health and learning disability. Inclusion in the review will mean that dementia will be covered in a comprehensive evaluation of policy and services spanning issues such as health promotion, prevention and early detection of dementia, effectiveness of interventions and broader issues such as human rights and social inclusion.

An Expert Working Committee on Issues in Old Age has been established and dementia will also be included in its remit, although it is of course recognised that some younger people also have dementia. The working committee has been asked to ensure that it reflects a broad representation of views. The review of mental health and learning disability is not expected to complete its work until mid-2005 but work is in hand to consider how the review recommendations might be phased as sections of the review work are completed.

High Hedges

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what plans he has to extend Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to Northern Ireland; [148673]

(2) what action the Government are taking to deal with the problem of high hedges in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [148719]

Angela Smith: The Government have no plans for high hedges legislation in Northern Ireland at present.

Hospital Trolley Waits

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to his answer of 7 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 406W, on hospital trolley waits, whether the December statistics represent *(a)* an estimate for the full month and *(b)* a total number collected on weekdays only. [148860]

Angela Smith: The December trolley wait statistics represent the number of trolley waits recorded in Accident and Emergency departments in Northern Ireland at 9.00am on weekday mornings. These figures show the total number of trolley waits reported by Accident & Emergency Departments at a point in time (9.00am) on week days during December.

Leak Inquiries

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inquiries his Department has conducted into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and on what occasions the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147009]

Mr. Paul Murphy: Since 1997, my Department has investigated three suspected leaks. In line with Exemptions 1*(a)* and 7*(b)* set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the practice of successive governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

This reply relates only to inquiries specifically within the Northern Ireland Office and does not cover the 11 Departments of the Northern Ireland Administration.

Neurosurgery Waiting Lists

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients were awaiting neurosurgery *(a)* inpatient admission and *(b)* outpatient assessment in Northern Ireland on the most recent date for which figures are available. [148845]

Angela Smith: The latest available waiting list figures show the position at 30 September 2003, when:

(a) there were 659 patients awaiting admission to hospital in the neurosurgery specialty;

(b) there were 354 patients awaiting a first outpatient appointment in the neurosurgery specialty.

This information is published in the "Northern Ireland Waiting List Quarterly Information Release" on the first Thursday in March, July, September and December. A copy of this publication is placed in the House of Commons Library or can be obtained from the DHSSPS website, internet address: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/index.html.

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147589]

Mr. Pearson: Procurement Policy in Northern Ireland is based on achieving best value for money while complying with European Community and other international obligations. The 11 Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office have not outsourced call centre or IT work to offshore companies in the last two years and have no plans to do so.

Rural White Paper

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to introduce a Rural White Paper for Northern Ireland. [147834]

Mr. Pearson: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, in consultation with the Rural Stakeholder Forum, has begun a review of rural development policy. A decision on whether or not to produce a Rural White Paper will be considered after that review has been completed.

Water/Sewerage Services

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress being made with the reform of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland. [148674]

Mr. Spellar: Detailed reform proposals are currently being developed, taking into account the substantial feedback received during last year's public consultation on water reform. The proposals will address the basis on which household water charges will be determined, the most effective public ownership model for water and sewerage services, and the most appropriate consumer representation, and economic and consumer regulation arrangements. These proposals will be subject to a full range of impact assessments, including an equality impact assessment, which I plan to publish for consultation in the spring.

In tandem with this work, a vigorous reform programme is being developed within water service to deliver efficiencies of up to £45 million per annum by 2010. Implementation of an interim efficiency action plan will result in savings of over £11 million during 2004–05.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many responses he received to his Department's "The Reform of Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland" consultation document; and how many of these responses were *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the introduction of water charging. [148720]

Mr. Spellar: A total of 784 written responses were received to the consultation document "The Reform of Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland" published on 11 March 2003.

The consultation document invited comment on a range of options regarding the basis on which domestic charges should be set. As the consultation document did not seek views on whether water charges should be

introduced or not, it is not possible to identify the number of responses *(a)* in favour or *(b)* against the introduction of water charging.

However, approximately 14,500 expressions of general opposition to Water Reform were received by petition, postcard etc.

SCOTLAND

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147579]

Mrs. McGuire: The Scotland Office has not outsourced any of its IT functions to offshore companies and has no plans to do so.

Universal Bank

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the Scottish clearing banks about their participation in the Post Office Universal Bank. [148751]

Mrs. McGuire: I have regular contact with ministerial colleagues and representatives from the industry.

As a result of discussions with the Government, all of the UK's major banks, including the Scottish clearing banks, are participating in the Universal Banking project by giving access to basic bank accounts at post offices.

The Government would urge all banks to provide their customers with access to their accounts through post offices. However, the decision to do so rests with individual institutions.

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage Scottish banks to make their services available through the Post Office branch network. [148957]

Mrs. McGuire: I have regular contact with ministerial colleagues and representatives from the industry.

All of the major Scottish banks currently allow access to their basic bank accounts through the Post Office branch network. Post Office Ltd. also provides access to a range of other bank accounts and is seeking to expand these in conjunction with all the major institutions.

The Government would urge all banks to provide their customers with access to their accounts through post offices. However, the decision to do so rests with individual institutions.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Departmental Christmas Expenditure

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much has been spent by her Department on *(a)* Christmas cards and *(b)* Christmas parties (i) in the last year and (ii) since 1997. [145595]

Mr. Caborn: The information is as follows:

(a) Expenditure on Christmas cards is detailed in the following table:

	Cost (£)
1997	No record
1998	No record
1999	1,971.00
2000	3,500.92
2001	2,211.39
2002	1,985
2003	1,587.50

(b) Expenditure on Christmas parties is detailed in the following table:

	Christmas party costs (£)
1997	No record
1998	No record
1999[1]	n/a
2000[2]	n/a
2001	4,452.23
2002	6,963.73
2003	6,941.85

[1] No Christmas party held this year. However, there was a new year's drinks reception on 18 January 2000. The cost was £4,386.03.

[2] No Christmas party held this year. However, there was a new year's drinks reception on 22 February 2001. The cost was £2,248.38.

Gambling

Jim Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment her Department has made of the size of fund the proposed Gambling Industry Charitable Trust will need to address problems of gambling addiction over the next 10 years; and if she will make a statement. [148470]

Mr. Caborn: We have accepted the advice of the Gambling Review Body that the gambling industry should in the first place be asked to provide £3 million a year to fund the Trust's work. The size of this contribution will need to be kept under review in the light of experience and the Trust's own views; and if it proves necessary to ask the industry to consider a larger contribution then we will do so.

Jim Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if the Government will bring forward legislation to introduce a levy on the gambling industry if the sector fails to agree voluntary funding of the Gambling Industry Charitable Trust. [148471]

Mr. Caborn: Yes. Clause 96 of the draft Gambling Bill (Cm 6014) which is now being considered by a Scrutiny Committee on both Houses makes provision to this effect.

Honours

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many honours nominations her Department has received for people involved in rugby league football in each of the last five years; how many have been awarded in each of those years; and if she will make a statement. [148743]

Mr. Caborn: We cannot provide the number of nominations for people involved in rugby league football as we do not keep records in this form. Three awards have been made to people involved in rugby league football since New Year 1999.

We receive nominations for people from a broad spectrum of sports and there is always stiff competition for the limited number of awards available in each Honours List. Individual nominations are considered strictly on merit: the discipline in which the individual has achieved success is not a factor in the decision-making process. We are always interested in receiving nominations from the public and sports bodies and the Rugby Football League is one of many of sports organisations invited on a regular basis to make nominations.

National Lottery

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many Lottery grants were given to *(a)* the hundred richest and *(b)* the hundred poorest wards in Wales, using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation published by the National Assembly for Wales in 1999 *(i)* from the inception of the Lottery to 1 May 1997 and (ii) from 2 May 1997 to date. [148491]

Estelle Morris: I am arranging for copies of this information to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rugby World Cup

Miss Kirkbride: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the total departmental cost was of visits to Australia for the Rugby World Cup. [145601]

Tessa Jowell: The total cost to the Department for the visits of two Ministers and officials to Australia for the Rugby World Cup was £44,161.

Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in (i) her Department and (ii) departmental agencies in the last 12 months. [147984]

Mr. Caborn: In the 12 months since December 2002 three security passes, none of which identify the Department nor the buildings to which they allow access, have been reported as lost. There have been no reports of stolen passes. The Royal Parks Agency do not differentiate between lost and stolen cards and three have been reported lost/stolen in the relevant period. In all cases the cards are electronic and are de-activated as soon as a report is received.

Tourism

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the balance of payments deficit in tourism was in each year since 1995. [149223]

Mr. Caborn: The balance of payments in tourism for the UK in each year since 1995 are shown in the following table.

Tourism balance of payments

£ million

	Overseas residents' spending in the UK	*UK residents' spending abroad*	*Balance of payments*
1995	11,763	15,386	-3,623
1996	12,290	16,223	-3,933
1997	12,244	16,931	-4,687
1998	12,671	19,489	-6,818
1999	12,498	22,020	-9,522
2000	12,805	24,251	-11,446
2001	11,306	25,332	-14,026
2002	11,737	26,962	-15,225

Source:
International Passenger Survey, National Statistics

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Ministers (Legal Fees)

Mr. Grieve: To ask the Solicitor-General if she will publish a list of the ministers who, since May 1997, have benefited from the Government paying their legal fees. [142541]

The Solicitor-General *[holding answer 11 December 2003]:* The question of whether a Minister's legal fees should be paid by Government, i.e. out of public funds, is primarily a matter for the relevant departmental accounting officer, normally the Permanent Secretary for the Minister's Department. Whether or not a Minister's legal fees, for example in relation to some private litigation, are being paid out of public funds is not information which is held by the Treasury Solicitor's Department or by any other of the legal teams in the Government Legal Service. The source from which to obtain this information will be each of the Departments.

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Solicitor-General what recent assessment she has made of the work of the Serious Fraud Office; and if she will make a statement. [146163]

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General and I meet the SFO Director on a regular (almost monthly) basis and on other occasions as required. These meetings are wide ranging and include casework, management and financial issues.

As well as our on-going contact the Director of the SFO is required to present the SFO's Annual Report to Parliament. The report details progress and performance of the SFO's operational activities. In addition the audited accounts of the SFO are laid before Parliament annually.

The SFO continues to provide an effective response to the most serious and complex frauds. Since its inception the SFO has convicted 71 per cent. of defendants who were charged.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Solicitor-General how many *(a)* offences of fraud and *(b)* serious frauds, involving breaches of trust by professionals, were reported to the Serious Fraud Office in each of the last three years; how many prosecutions were initiated; what the outcome was in each case; and if she will make a statement. [146164]

The Solicitor General: The SFO does not routinely record the professions of individuals reported to them. The specific information requested could be produced only at disproportionate costs. It is however the case that the SFO has in the past and will continue to prosecute, where appropriate, professionals such as lawyers and accountants for fraud offences which meet the Department's criteria for acceptance of a case.

An ad hoc inspection of files reveals that since 1 January 2001 the SFO has commenced at least 10 investigations where one or more of the suspects is a qualified accountant or lawyer. In the cases identified there are total of 14 accountants or lawyers who are suspects. Prosecutions have commenced in some of these cases but they are yet to reach the trial stage.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Solicitor-General what plans she has to set up branches of the Serious Fraud Office in the regions. [146165]

The Solicitor-General: I have no current plans to set up regional offices; staff are employed and based in the regions from time to time in accordance with individual case demands. However, with nearly 50 per cent. of cases based in London and the South East and a current total permanent staff of some 240, it has so far proved not to be necessary or economic to establish a regional base. As the Serious Fraud Office expands this is something that will be kept under review.

TRANSPORT

Disabled Drivers

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has undertaken into the provision of a temporary disability scheme for car drivers to supplement the Orange Disk scheme. [148271]

Mr. McNulty: The Blue (formerly Orange) Badge Scheme provides a national arrangement of on-street parking concessions for disabled people with severe walking difficulties or the most severe upper limb disabilities and those who are registered blind. The Scheme was introduced in 1971 since when it has been the subject of several reviews.

The latest review was completed in December 2002. Ministers accepted the majority of the 47 recommendations made by our statutory advisers, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, to improve the Scheme. We are taking these forward through changes to primary and secondary legislation, research and in new guidance to local authorities on the Scheme. The recommendations and the Government's response to them were placed in the House Libraries on 18 December 2002.

On the research side we are pursuing three projects arising from the review: one to look at the feasibility of setting up a database of blue badge holders to assist with enforcement; a second to examine the current exemption from the Scheme for the four Central London Boroughs; and a third to look at the case for extending eligibility to other groups of disabled people.

Drink Driving

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents were caused by drink driving in Lancashire in each of the last five years. [148364]

Mr. Jamieson: Whether an accident was caused by drink-driving is not recorded as part of the Department's personal injury accident database. However the following table shows the number and severity of accidents in Lancashire where at least one of the drivers involved provided a positive breath test or refused to provide a breath test.

Accidents involving positive breath tests in Lancashire

Severity	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Fatal	0	2	0	1	1
Serious	39	39	47	35	35
Slight	84	114	79	110	126
Total	123	155	126	146	162

Speed Cameras

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road traffic speed cameras there are in the area covered by the Lancashire Constabulary; and what the estimated revenue from them is in the current financial year. [147536]

Mr. Jamieson: Currently there are 210 fixed speed camera sites and 60 mobile sites within the Lancashire Safety Camera Partnership area. Estimated revenue from fixed penalties for speeding offences detailed in the partnerships operational case for 2003–04 is £7,200,000, although this amount will depend on the number of motorists that exceed the speed limit. The portion returned to the partnership is that needed to cover the cost of their camera activity.

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the criteria for the installation of speed cameras, with particular reference to the cameras sited at *(a)* Highlands Road, Fareham and *(b)* Gosport Road, Fareham. [147155]

Mr. Jamieson: Speed cameras within the Safety Camera Programme are sited in accordance with the Handbook of Rules to the scheme which is available in the Library of the House. The two camera sites referred to fully meet both the casualty criteria and conspicuity and visibility criteria.

Airlines (Safety Standards)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether safety standards that have to be

met by an airline for a permit to be granted to operate in the airspace of each of the other EU and EEA member states are identical to those which have to be met before his Department will grant a British permit to operate in UK airspace; [149031]

(2) whether a permit issued to an airline by another member state of the EU or EEA to operate in its airspace is sufficient authorisation to operate in UK airspace. [149032]

Mr. McNulty: All airlines operating international services are required to have certificates showing that they meet the safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. As Contracting States to the Chicago Convention, EEA (including EU) Member States are required to recognise the certificates issued by other Contracting States to their airlines unless they have reason to believe that they have not been issued in accordance with the ICAO standards.

If another Member State has issued an operating permit to an airline we would expect that airline to meet the necessary international safety standards. However, the fact that another Member State had issued a permit would not itself provide authorisation for that airline to operate to the UK. The UK reserves the right to make its own decisions on whether or not to issue a permit. Permits may also be refused, suspended or revoked for safety or other reason, as illustrated in my answer to the hon. Member of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 429–30W. Other Member States may also take permit action for reasons other than safety.

Airports (Scotland)

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses were received to the Future of Air Transport—Scotland consultation document; and of these *(a)* how many expressed a view in favour of a second runway at Edinburgh airport, *(b)* how many expressed a view against a second runway at Edinburgh airport and *(c)* how many did not express a preference. [147832]

Mr. McNulty: A total of 325 written responses and 965 questionnaire responses were received to the Scottish Consultation Document. The results of the consultation are summarised on the Department's Airport White Paper website.

The stakeholder consultation response and the NOP questionnaire response both indicate that of those who expressed a view, there were significantly more consultees in favour of a new runway than against it. In the case of the public response the numbers were more evenly matched.

CCTV

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to fund the extension of CCTV cameras in London's tube and train stations. [148438]

Mr. McNulty: The Department has no plans to fund additional CCTV cameras in London at either Tube or train stations. This is an operational matter for London Underground, Network Rail and the train operating companies to decide, in accordance with their own needs and their responsibilities for safety and security.

Central Railway Project

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the Central Railway project. [148146]

Mr. McNulty: We are considering carefully Central Railway's proposals and will respond to Central Railway in due course.

Cheltenham/Gloucester Parkway Station

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he has had with the Strategic Rail Authority on the construction of a Cheltenham/Gloucester Parkway railway station near Gloucester airport; [148533]

(2) if he will assess the advantages and the disadvantages of constructing a Cheltenham/Gloucester Parkway railway station near Gloucester airport. [148534]

Mr. McNulty: The Strategic Rail Authority is carrying out a pre-feasibility study into the potential for a new parkway station near Gloucester. This work is to assess the business case for and operational implications of a new station. Several locations are being assessed including some in the vicinity of the airport. The study is due to be completed in February.

Driving Licences

Geraldine Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from the EC Committee on Driving Licence working groups on the procedures employed to *(a)* assess and *(b)* minimise the road safety risks associated with epilepsy. [148552]

Mr. Jamieson: The appropriate working group of the EC Committee on Driving Licences has not yet met, therefore I have received no such information. I expect the epilepsy Working Group to meet three or four times during 2004, and to report back on its conclusions in about 18 months time.

Edinburgh Airport

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* households and *(b)* electors live within the possible new Edinburgh airport boundary as outlined in the Aviation White Paper. [147900]

Mr. McNulty: There are 33 residential properties within the possible new Edinburgh airport boundary outlined in the Aviation White Paper. We do not have information on the number of electors at these properties.

Environmental Audit Committee Report

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the research referred to in paragraph 4 of the Government's response to the Environmental Audit Committee's Report (CM6063). [149023]

Mr. Jamieson: The finding that congestion costs are over three-quarters of the full external costs of road transport can be found in Table B on page v of "Surface Transport Costs and Charges: Great Britain 1998", Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds, July 2001. The research was commissioned by the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Hazardous Incidents

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have made reports to the Confidential Hazardous Incident Reporting Programme, in each year since it was introduced. [148485]

Mr. Jamieson: Since the CHIRP was introduced on 1 December 1982 there have been a total 4,488 reported incidents for the aviation and maritime programmes.

The number of reports for the last four years for the aviation CHIRP is as follows:

	Number
2000	330
2001	379
2002	345
2003	373

The Maritime CHIRP was introduced in July 2003 and has so far received 38 reports.

Illegal Immigrants

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the *(a)* date and *(b)* nature of each incident involving ships in British waters assisting other vessels attempting to bring illegal immigrants to Britain since 1997; and what the names of the vessels were in each case. [148502]

Mr. Jamieson: The Maritime and Coastguard Agency co-ordinates the search and rescue of persons in distress at sea and responded to over 13,000 incidents in the last year. The Agency collects data about the nature of incidents, including the types of vessels involved in terms of whether they are commercial ships, fishing vessels or pleasure craft. However, the Agency does not collect data relating to illegal immigration.

The UK Immigration Service also does not collate the information in the format requested. However, the Service does work closely with European counterparts to identify vessels concerned with smuggling potential illegal immigrants to the UK. In addition, as part of REFLEX, the government's multi-agency task force to combat organised immigration crime, the Immigration Service co-operates with other government departments to exchange information on those suspected of involvement in maritime smuggling.

Leak Inquiries

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list occasions on which his Department has conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if he will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147192]

Mr. McNulty: The Department for Transport was formed in May 2002 and since then it has not instigated any inquiries into alleged leaks from members of its staff.

Liquid Natural Gas

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what tax advantages are available for liquid natural gas vehicles. [147940]

Mr. Jamieson: Due to its environmental benefits, liquid natural gas (LNG) enjoys a lower rate of duty compared to conventional fuels, equivalent to 6p per litre compared to some 47p per litre for petrol and diesel. In the pre-Budget report the Chancellor announced that this differential will be held constant for a further three years.

Alternatively fuelled vehicles are also eligible for lower rates of vehicle excise duty depending on their CO_2 emissions.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles using liquid natural gas benefited from tax advantages in the last year for which figures are available; and how many were *(a)* cars and *(b)* vans. [147941]

Mr. Jamieson: Figures published by the Natural Gas Vehicle Association for August estimate that there are 875 natural gas vehicles in the UK which will have benefited from the duty differential for natural gas. Of these 20 are estimated to be cars: there is no estimate for vans. Details of the split between vehicles using liquid natural gas and compressed natural gas were not published.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what Government grants are available to convert petrol cars to liquid natural gas; what the take-up has been in the current financial year; and how much is available for the remainder of the financial year. [147942]

Mr. Jamieson: Limited grants are available under the TransportEnergy programmes to offset the additional costs of purchasing clean fuelled vehicles including those powered by liquid natural gas (LNG). Grant offers have been made for 45 LNG vehicles in this financial year, which will be honoured once the conversions are completed under the terms of the grant offer letters.

The Energy Saving Trust, who administer the grant programmes for the Government, will not be issuing any new grant offer letters this financial year as they have now received applications to cover the full TransportEnergy programme budget of nearly £30 million. This is a considerable increase from the £18 million spend in 2001–02, and the Trust forecast they will provide grants for around 8,000 vehicles this year, compared with 5,000 last year. The grant programmes will resume in April 2004.

M6 Tolls

Tony Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the impact of the M6 Toll on traffic flows in the West Midlands. [148649]

Mr. Jamieson: At present it is too early to say with certainty what impact the M6 Toll has had on traffic flows in the West Midlands. The Highways Agency is monitoring traffic flows on the M6 Toll and adjacent road network and a full report will be prepared in April 2004, once traffic patterns have stabilised. A more detailed study report will follow when the toll road has been open for 12 months.

Moving Vehicles (Smoking Ban)

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to outlaw smoking while in control of a moving vehicle. [148823]

Mr. Jamieson: There are no plans to prohibit smoking when driving. However, drivers who fail to have proper control of their vehicle for any reason risk prosecution.

North Berwick-Edinburgh Line

Anne Picking: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action the Strategic Rail Authority is taking with regard to the withdrawal of rolling stock from the North Berwick-Edinburgh commuter line when the current refurbished units are returned to WAGN at the end of March. [147992]

Mr. McNulty: North Berwick services are operated by trains hired from WAGN under a lease which expires in March. The Strategic Rail Authority, Scotrail and the Scottish Executive have therefore been considering options for replacing them. Trials of alternative rolling stock have taken place on the line and Scotrail announced on 14 January that the replacement trains would be formed of locomotive-hauled carriages.

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147590]

Mr. McNulty: The Department complies with Government procurement policy, which is that all procurement is based on value for money, having due regard to propriety and regularity. The Department must comply with the requirements of the EU Treaty, including the principles of non-discrimination, the EC procurement directives and the UK's international obligations. The Department has not outsourced any IT or call centre jobs to offshore companies and currently has no plans to do so.

Railways

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to reduce the costs of *(a)* administration and *(b)* consultants within the railway industry. [147329]

Mr. McNulty: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said today in his statement to the House, the Department for Transport is undertaking a review of the rail industry. This will consider all of the industry's costs and how better value for passengers can be obtained from the Government's funding.

Road Junctions (Christchurch)

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reason representations in respect of the proposed compulsory purchase order at Barrack Road/Stour Road junction in Christchurch are being considered by the Government Office of the North East. [149025]

Mr. Jamieson: The Secretary of State for Transport's quasi-judicial role for considering all Local Highway Authority Schemes and Orders for his confirmation, such as the case for the proposed Compulsory Purchase Order at Barrack Road/Stour Road junction in Christchurch, is undertaken as a national function and is based (since 1989) in Government Office for the North East.

Robin Hood Country

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what historical basis road signs on the M1 motorway describe Nottinghamshire as Robin Hood country. [148744]

Mr. Jamieson: The signs were requested by Nottinghamshire county council, whose area has been historically connected with the legend of Robin Hood.

Ships (Near Misses)

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many near misses between ships there were in each year since 1997 while in British waters; and what steps he is taking to reduce the number of such incidents. [148503]

Mr. Jamieson: The number of hazardous incidents in UK waters involving more than one vessel, where at least one was a 'ship', since 1997 were:

	Number of incidents
1997	55
1998	35
1999	36
2000	49
2001	46
2002	46
2003	67

Note:
These figures are for incidents reported to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) by 15 January 2004.

Mariners are encouraged to report any such incidents and these reports are considered with the alleged offending vessel invited to comment. Actions arising

from this include reminding the alleged offending vessel of the importance of maintaining good seamanship at all time and referring them to the appropriate literature or, where necessary, inspection or prosecution. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is also actively involving the mariner in how to promote awareness on avoiding these situations through its website and promotional literature.

Speed Limits (Roads)

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce minimum speed limits on *(a)* motorways and *(b)* dual carriageways. [148821]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government has no plans to introduce minimum speed limits on motorways or dual carriageways.

Speeding (Penalty Points)

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals not to penalise motorists guilty of speeding with penalty points on their driving licences when it is a first offence. [146991]

Mr. Jamieson: Speeding is a serious threat to road safety which can result in death and serious injury. We see no reason to distinguish between first and subsequent offences.

Strategic Rail Authority

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he has had with the Chairman of the Strategic Rail Authority on publication of its annual strategic plan; [149037]

(2) how many drafts of the Strategic Rail Authority's strategic plan for 2004 have been *(a)* received and *(b)* commented on by his Department; [149038]

(3) what powers he has to determine the date of publications issued by the Strategic Rail Authority; [149039]

(4) under what authority he is able to determine the date of publication by the Strategic Rail Authority of its strategic plan; [149040]

(5) when *(a)* he and *(b)* his officials first received a draft of the Strategic Rail Authority's strategic plan for 2004. [149041]

Mr. Darling: The Government and the Strategic Rail Authority have agreed that it is not appropriate to publish a Strategic Plan in advance of the review now taking place of Government expenditure. I have the power to determine the date of any publication by the Strategic Rail Authority by issuing a direction, as prescribed under sections 206(3), 207(5) and 209(5) of the Transport Act 2000. My officials saw one draft of the Strategic Rail Authority's Strategic Plan, which they received on 16 December 2003, but made no comment on its content. No ministers saw the draft, nor was its existence drawn to their attention.

Street Works

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to develop an England-wide system for the notification of street works owned by utilities and road departments similar to the Susie Phone system in Scotland. [147096]

Mr. Jamieson: Local authorities in England already have systems for the notification of street works. We believe that the large number of authorities involved makes a single system covering the whole of England unrealistic. However, the Department has undertaken a study to consider how future systems could be developed in a way that ensured consistency and compatibility between them while remaining locally based.

Traffic Management Bill

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the basis used in the regulatory impact assessment of the Traffic Management Bill for calculating the extent of delay imposed by incidents on the trunk road network. [145546]

Mr. Jamieson: The Highways Agency has calculated total motorway congestion from Department for Transport figures for estimated time lost compared with free flow speed (per kilometre travelled for different vehicle types) together with figures for total motorway traffic taken from the Transport Statistics Bulletin.

The Highways Agency used a variety of data to estimate incident related congestion. This included research from the Transport Research Laboratory which estimated that 25 per cent. of congestion was due to incidents. The Highways Agency Traffic Control Centre Project estimated a figure of 30 per cent.

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that the powers contained in section 74 of the Traffic Management Bill are universally adopted by local authorities. [147094]

Mr. Jamieson: Clause 74 of the Traffic Management Bill enables the Lord Chancellor to make regulations specifying how a penalty charge notice may be served and its content, such as the alleged contravention, the amount of the penalty charge, by when it has to be paid, how and where it can be paid, discount available for early payment, right to make representations and so on. The clause specifically excludes the power to stop vehicles for the purposes of issuing a penalty charge notice.

All local authorities receiving civil enforcement powers as a result of this Bill will be required to abide by the terms of these regulations.

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sources were used to produce the figures for the costs to business of utility streetworks in the Regulatory Impact Assessment of the Traffic Management Bill. [147097]

Mr. Jamieson: The Regulatory Impact Assessment of the Traffic Management Bill (page 5) discusses the total economic costs of utility street works rather than the costs to business alone.

There are two estimates. The first of £35 million in 1983 prices is taken from the 1985 'Review of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950' (HMSO—ISBN 0 11 550729 9, page 119). The second of £2.4 billion is taken from a 1992 report of the Transport Research Laboratory. Unfortunately, this latter figure was quoted in error and refers to the total value of utility construction work. However a 2001 report by the Laboratory 'Mitigating the Disruption caused by Utility Street Works' (TRL report 516—ISSN 0968–4107, page 9) estimated the annual traffic delay costs of utility street works at some £2 billion. My department has commissioned Halcrow to update this work.

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what economic model the Government has used in working out the figures for the Regulatory Impact Assessment of the Traffic Management Bill; and if he will place a copy in the Library. [147099]

Mr. Jamieson: Figures presented in the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Traffic Management Bill have been calculated using software packages models Transport User Benefit Analysis (TUBA), Cost Benefit Analysis (COBA), and Queues and Delays at Roadworks (QUADRO).

TUBA and COBA were used to calculate figures relating to the Highways Agency's Traffic Officer Service. The model used to calculate the financial cost of disruption caused by utilities' street works is called QUADRO.

Manuals and guidance for using these packages are available via the DfT website as detailed below.

The COBA User Manual is available at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft control/documents/contentservertemplate/dft index.hcst?n = 7912&1 = 4

The TUBA User Manual is available at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft transstrat/documents/page/dft transstrat 50799Q.hcsp

The TUBA Guidance is available at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft transstrat/documents/page/dft transstrat 507975.pdf

The QUADRO user manual is available at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft control/documents/contentservertemplate/dft index.hcst?n = 7914&1 = 4

US Ships (Decommissioning)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 56W on US Ships (Decommissioning), who carried out the routing plans and initial risk assessment for the return of the US ships under tow; what the earliest date the risk assessment determined the ships could safely make a return journey was; and if he will place the *(a)* risk assessment and *(b)* routing plans in the Library. [148618]

Mr. Jamieson: The UK took the view that it could be unsafe to return the ships to the US immediately, given the likely winter weather in the Atlantic and the need for a high degree of confidence of fair weather for the duration of the tow. It concluded that a return passage could not be contemplated before the spring. Passages both to the north and south of the United Kingdom have been considered in relation to notional routes which respect mandatory maritime traffic schemes and advising guidance. As weather windows become available in the spring, routing options will be subject to more detailed assessment, once application is made, and copies of such assessments will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

International Trade

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column 449W, on international trade, if she will make a statement on the impact of the Commons Agricultural Policy on the competitiveness of products from developing countries. [144808]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) supports farmers' incomes via a number of methods—direct payments, export subsidies, intervention buying and tariffs—which ensure that EU farmers receive higher prices for their goods. These measures increase the level of production and therefore result in lower imports and / or higher exports than would otherwise be the case. This can have the effect of depressing world prices for certain commodities. Developing country producers who would otherwise be competitive on world markets may find themselves unable to compete. This could distort the allocation of resources in a particular country away from those in which it has a comparative advantage towards less competitive sectors.

The CAP reforms agreed in June 2003 will help to break the link between income support and production in the EU and will reconnect farmers to their markets. Production occurring as a result of loss-making activities should cease as farmers decisions are increasingly determined by market forces rather than subsidies. This production response will reduce EU production and net exports and, where this results in a higher world price, it should have a beneficial impact on developing country producers.

Further reform of the domestic support regime is necessary and the Commission have recently produced proposals for reform covering the cotton, tobacco, olive oil and hops sectors and proposals for reform of the sugar regime are expected next year.

Beef Imports

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what restrictions she has placed on imports of beef into the UK from the USA following the recent BSE case there; and what discussions she has had with her EU counterparts on achieving a common approach to policy. [148306]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 15 January 2004]*: Animal and public health in the UK are protected from BSE from third countries by existing EU import rules. These rules require any third country exporting meat or live animals into the Community to have in place controls equivalent to those in the EU. These controls are supported by a requirement for veterinary certification in relation to individual meat consignments.

Imports of beef and beef products are permitted only if EU rules requiring the removal of specified risk material (SRM—eg skull, tonsils, spinal cord, intestine) and methods of slaughter are met.

A recent meeting of the EU's Chief Veterinary Officers was informed that the European Commission were following up the implications of the recent BSE case with the US authorities. The Chief Veterinary Officers supported the Commission in taking this approach. An EU technical visit to the US is being arranged to evaluate the position.

Dairy Farming

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many dairy farms were in operation in each of the last 20 years for which figures are available. [148695]

Alun Michael: The following figures show holdings in England where dairy is the predominant activity.

	Dairy holdings
1983	30,361
1984	29,912
1985	28,300
1986	27,583
1987	26,138
1988	24,767
1989	23,849
1990	22,793
1991	22,701
1992	21,712
1993	18,771
1994	20,579
1995	19,632
1996	18,904
1997	18,007
1998	17,014
1999	16,313
2000	15,219
2001	14,106
2002	14,342

Note:
Figures prior to 2000 show main holdings only. From 2000 onwards minor holdings are included.
Source:
June Agricultural Census

Departmental Lawyers

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many lawyers her Department employs. [148921]

Alun Michael: Defra currently employs 89 lawyers, plus 2 legal trainees.

EU Regulations (Fruit)

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reasons the Department initiated proceedings against the Asda company in respect of the EU horticultural regulations relating to the size and shape of items of fruit; and what the costs involved were. [147012]

Alun Michael *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* The Department instituted proceedings against Asda at South Hampshire Magistrates Court in respect of 14 breaches of EU marketing standards identified during an inspection at the company's Fareham store on 1 November 2000. None of the alleged breaches relate to the size or shape of produce. The allegations relate to the retail of poor quality produce and failure to label with the correct quality class or country of origin.

The defendant argued in the courts that the offences with which it was charged were not known to law because the UK legislation establishing them was defective. These arguments were rejected by the House of Lords, which awarded Defra the costs of its appeals in the Divisional Court and the House of Lords. The quantum of these costs has not yet been determined.

The matters have been remitted to the magistrates court for trial. The costs of the case in the magistrates court will be decided at its conclusion as is usual practice.

Fisheries

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the impact of the decisions of the December 2003 EU Fisheries Council on *(a)* fishing in the Irish Sea, *(b)* fish landings in Whitehaven and *(c)* policy on designated ports; and if she will make a statement. [147448]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* We agreed a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Irish Sea cod of 2,150 tonnes (a 10 per cent. increase on the 2003 TAC that in fact represents a reduction in fishing effort). We agreed 20 per cent. cuts in the associated plaice and sole TACs, as opposed to the 47 per cent. and 34 per cent. cuts proposed by the Commission. A threefold increase in the haddock TAC will help to balance cuts, and a minimal cut in the nephrops TAC allows current catch levels to be maintained.

Landings in Whitehaven, mainly demersal species and shellfish from both UK and Irish vessels, are likely to reflect the above TAC changes.

The designated port arrangements for the United Kingdom will not be affected except that landings of North Sea haddock taken under the special conditions set out in Annex IV of Council Regulation 2287/2003 will be restricted to designated ports in Scotland and on the east coast of England.

Food Exporters

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the announcement by the Rural Payments Agency that it is to end export refunds immediately to exporters of processed foods to the new EU entrant states. [147050]

Alun Michael: The Rural Payments Agency recently issued advice to traders on the transitional arrangements for the payment of refunds on goods exported to the new European Union (EU) entrant states.

From 1 May 2004, when the ten acceding states become full members of the EU, refund payments will cease. Among the accessionary arrangements designed to minimise the impact of these changes, some entrant states and the EU entered into a number of 'double

benefit' agreements. Under these arrangements, export refunds are not paid in return for a reciprocal waiving of import duty in the importing country for certain exports of agricultural products. A number of these arrangements affect processed foods exports. In addition the Commission has identified possible problems in relation to speculation in the sugar sector and potential stock piling of community exports in acceding member states. To counter this sugar export refunds have been withdrawn with effect from 28 November 2003.

Foot and Mouth

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many firms are in dispute with her Department over payments for work carried out during the recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease; what the total outstanding sum in dispute is; and for what reasons each payment is being withheld. [148646]

Mr. Bradshaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Brian Cotter), on 6 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 259–62W.

Livestock Farming

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the recovery of livestock farming in *(a)* Copeland and *(b)* Cumbria since January 2002; and if she will make a statement. [146503]

Alun Michael *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Other than the June annual Agricultural Census, which amongst other things records the number of animals present on holdings on the designated census day, no specific assessment has been made of the recovery of livestock farming in Copeland and Cumbria since January 2002. However, data from the Agricultural Census of June 2002[1] shows that in Cumbria there has been an increase in livestock numbers compared with June 2001, while in Copeland the position remained broadly similar. The details are as follows:

Recovery of livestock farming in Copeland and Cumbria since January 2002

	Copeland	*Cumbria*
Cattle and Calves		
2000	42,217	510,446
2001	40,502	281,490
2002	39,938	426,484
Sheep and Lambs		
2000	251,408	2,633,973
2001	221,293	1,499,064
2002	219,897	1,801,789
Pigs		
2000	—	54,441
2001	—	10,119
2002	—	23,555

Note:
Pig data in Copeland have been omitted to prevent the disclosure of information relating to individual holdings.
[1] June 2003 data is expected to be published in March.

Milk

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the UK's raw milk production was in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how this raw milk is processed, broken down by percentage. [148690]

Alun Michael: The following table provides information on the UK raw milk production and supply, and how this supply is then utilised for liquid consumption and the manufacture of products.

UK raw milk production and utilisation

Million litres

	Calendar years									
	1993	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Supply and Use (a)										
Production	14,317	14,549	14,259	14,256	14,420	14,218	14,587	14,078	14,291	14,449
Imports	[1]—	[1]—	181	111	128	129	111	105	64	72
Exports	89	129	185	173	290	373	465	445	414	421
Total new supply	14,228	14,420	14,255	14,194	14,258	13,973	14,233	13,738	13,941	14,100
of which:										
For liquid consumption	6,806 (48%)	6,765 (47%)	6,922 (49%)	6,838 (48%)	6,748 (47%)	6,739 (48%)	6,853 (48%)	6,768 (49%)	6,761 (48%)	6,756 (48%)
For manufacture	7,061	7,298	6,918	6,934	7,059	6,821	6,988	6,550	6,714	6,939
of which:										
Butter *(b)*	284 (2%)	292 (2%)	273 (2%)	266 (2%)	284 (2%)	281 (2%)	290 (2%)	270 (2%)	259 (2%)	279 (2%)
Cheese	3,267 (23%)	3,248 (23%)	3,182 (22%)	3,348 (24%)	3,371 (24%)	3,257 (23%)	3,297 (23%)	3,032 (22%)	3,568 (26%)	3,449 (24%)
Cream *(b)*	262 (2%)	277 (2%)	279 (2%)	276 (2%)	263 (2%)	263 (2%)	271 (2%)	266 (2%)	259 (2%)	260 (2%)
Condensed milk *(c)*	731 (5%)	751 (5%)	661 (5%)	719 (5%)	692 (5%)	643 (5%)	603 (4%)	522 (4%)	536 (4%)	491 (3%)
Milk powder—full cream	458 (3%)	531 (4%)	623 (4%)	558 (4%)	822 (6%)	809 (6%)	853 (6%)	932 (7%)	781 (6%)	825 (6%)
Milk powder—skimmed	1,437 (10%)	1,567 (11%)	1,422 (10%)	1,322 (9%)	1,146 (8%)	1,101 (8%)	1,123 (8%)	889 (6%)	663 (5%)	973 (7%)
Other	623 (4%)	632 (4%)	480 (3%)	445 (3%)	482 (3%)	467 (3%)	549 (4%)	640 (5%)	649 (5%)	663 (5%)
Dairy wastage and stock change	[1]—	[1]—	113 (1%)	86 (1%)	112 (1%)	80 (1%)	56 (-)	91 (1%)	132 (1%)	98 (1%)
Other uses *(d)*	[1]—	[1]—	301 (2%)	336 (2%)	338 (2%)	333 (2%)	338 (2%)	329 (2%)	334 (2%)	307 (2%)

[1] Equals less than 0.5 per cent.

Note:

(a) Aggregated data from surveys run by Defra, SEERAD and DARDNI on the utilisation of milk by dairies.
(b) Includes the utilisation of the residual fat of low fat liquid milk production.
(c) Includes condensed milk used in the production of chocolate crumb and in the production of machine skimmed milk.
(d) Includes farmhouse consumption, milk fed to stock and on farm waste. Excludes suckled milk.

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on her Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether her Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries her Department has outsourced these jobs; how much her Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147582]

Alun Michael: Consistent with the need to ensure fair and transparent procurement processes in line with legal obligations, the Department's procurement policy is to obtain value for money and protect the public purse. In evaluating any procurement decision containing any offshoring proposals, the Department will have regard to the net cost to the Exchequer.

Defra is currently conducting a procurement according to EU requirements to outsource its IT provision, and award of contract is expected in June 2004. The contract will be evaluated in line with the above policy and will also follow the latest Government guidance on tax planning and tax avoidance. It is expected that around 300 staff will transfer to the new supplier under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) 1981) arrangements.

There was no spend on off shore IT or off shore call centre outsourcing in 2002–03 and in the current year is nil to date. No sum has been budgeted for off shore outsourcing for the years 2004–05 and 2005–06.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the latest advice is that she has offered to those who use organophosphates for sheep dipping. [148305]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* Since 1995 the sale and supply of OP sheep dips has been restricted to those holding a Certificate of Competence in the Use of Sheep Dips awarded by the National Proficiency Tests Council (NPTC). The training course run by the NPTC covers the use and handling of sheep dips before, during and after dipping.

In addition the Health and Safety Executive has issued to all sheep farmers an advisory leaflet on sheep dipping. This includes specific advice on the handling and use of OP sheep dips. This leaflet was last revised in 1998.

In November 1999 the VMD also distributed to all holders of the NPTC Certificate of Competence in Sheep Dipping an A4 laminated sheet highlighting the risks of exposure to OP concentrate. Agricultural merchants are required to supply copies of this advisory sheet to all purchasers of sheep dips, together with protective gloves.

Advice on the safe use and handling of each specific OP sheep dip product is also included on the product label. These were last revised when OP sheep dips were returned to the market in containers with fully enclosed delivery systems in 2001–02.

Sugar Beet

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what percentage of the annual sugar consumption in the United Kingdom she estimates is met by domestic sugar beet production. [148611]

Alun Michael: It is not possible to give an estimate of the percentage of the annual sugar consumption in the UK which is met by domestic sugar beet production. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, it is not possible to distinguish between exports of sugar produced from imported sugar cane and exports of sugar produced from domestic sugar beet. Secondly, not all sugar is consumed directly, it is also manufactured into many processed products. Although those processed products may be produced in the UK, they may not be consumed here.

However, the Department produces data on the annual total production of sugar (on a refined basis) from domestic sugar beet and supplies for the UK market. These figures are published annually in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom". Copies are available in the House Library or on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/esg. The latest figures available are for 2002 and are provisional. A total of 1,390,000 tonnes of sugar were produced from sugar beet in 2002. The UK imported 1,309,000 tonnes of sugar and exported 487,000 tonnes of sugar. Thus; the total new supply of sugar available for use in the UK in 2002 was 2,212,000 tonnes (see Table 1 as follows). UK production as a percentage of new supply, which is the commonly used measure of self sufficiency, was 63 per cent. in 2002.

Table 1. Sugar production in the UK in 2002[1]

Calendar year 2002 (provisional)	*Sugar (thousand tonnes refined basis)*
Production[2]	1,390
Imports from:	
the EU	186
the rest of the world	1,123
Exports to:	
the EU	104
the rest of the world	383
Total new supply	2,212
Production as percentage of total new supply for use in the UK	63

[1] Extracted from "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2002"
[2] Sugar coming out of the factory in the early part of the new year is regarded as being of the previous calendar year's production.

TREASURY

Air Passenger Duty

John Barrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the case for changes in the basis of air passenger duty from payment per passenger to payment per flight, and for relating it to the

amount of carbon dioxide and other pollutants produced during the flight; and if he will make a statement. [147831]

John Healey: The use of economic instruments to encourage the aviation industry to take account of and, where appropriate, reduce its contribution to global warming, local air pollution and noise pollution was considered in the Air Transport White Paper, published in December 2003. The White Paper supported widened use of airport charges linked to the level of local noise and air pollutant emissions. In addition, we announced that, as part of the Government's commitment to using economic instruments to help tackle greenhouse gas emissions, the UK will push hard at international level to secure agreement on including aviation in the EU's emissions trading scheme.

Levels of all taxes, including air passenger duty, are reviewed Budget-by-Budget, taking account of a range of social, economic and environmental considerations.

Financial Products (Risk Warnings)

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the need for a risk warning to be attached to *(a)* all financial products and *(b)* documentation about pensions. [148381]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services Authority requires regulated financial products to be promoted in a manner that is clear, fair and not misleading.

In particular, for investment products it requires firms to adequately describe the risks involved. In the case of personal and stakeholder pensions, it specifically requires firms to explain those risks to the consumer before the product is bought.

The Department of Trade and Industry is currently consulting on the provision of risk warnings for consumers as part of its ongoing review of the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Tax Credits

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to develop a substitute eligibility test for working tax credit fast-track; [148388]

(2) what plans he has to conduct a reappraisal of the fast-track eligibility rules for claiming working tax credit. [148389]

Dawn Primarolo: There are no plans to change the eligibility rules. As with other issues, we continue to keep the policy under review.

Unemployment (Warrington, North)

Helen Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the change in the level of unemployment in the Warrington North constituency has been since 1997. [148248]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Helen Jones dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about unemployment in the Warrington North constituency. I am replying in his absence. (148248)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles statistics of unemployment from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) following the internationally standard International Labour Organisation definitions. For Parliamentary constituencies, information about unemployment rates, but not levels, is available. However, the LFS sample size is too small to give reliable estimates of unemployment in the Warrington North constituency.

ONS also compiles statistics of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for local areas including Parliamentary constituencies. The annual average number of JSA claimants in the Warrington North constituency decreased by 763 from 2,041 in 1997 to 1,278 in 2003.

Armed Forces (Departure Payments)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the proposed early departure payments for members of the Armed Forces which will replace pension payments will attract national insurance contributions. [147575]

Dawn Primarolo: The early departure payments will not attract national insurance contributions, since they will be made under a statutory scheme and would not be considered as earnings derived from employment.

Banking Regulation

Keith Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which banks have a licence to operate in the UK; and when each received its licence. [149498]

Ruth Kelly: Under the Financial Services and Markets Act (2000), banks, building societies and credit unions are authorised by the Financial Services Authority to accept deposits in the UK.

Details of the banks and other institutions which are authorised with permission to accept deposits in the UK and the date when they received authorisation can be found on the Financial Services Authority's website (www.fsa.qov.uk).

Child Tax Credit

Mr. Webb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer per year of increasing by 100 per cent. the rate of child tax credit in respect of children under five. [148619]

Dawn Primarolo: The annual cost would be approximately £3 billion per year.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in the Buckingham constituency *(a)* have applied for, *(b)* are eligible for and *(c)* received the child tax credit in 2003–04. [149191]

Dawn Primarolo: The estimated number of families receiving tax credits in the Buckingham constituency at 3 July 2003 is shown in "Child and Working Tax Credit Statistics. Geographical analyses—July 2003", which is on the Inland Revenue website at: www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/menu.

htm. The estimates are based on a sample of cases, and are subject to sampling uncertainty. Estimates for January 2004 will be published on 30 January 2004.

No estimates are available at the constituency level of the number of people who have claimed tax credits or who are eligible for them.

Citizen Information Project

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what dates he has met Scottish Ministers to discuss the Citizen Information Project and its implications for Scotland; [147920]

(2) how many members of staff have been seconded from the Register Office for Scotland to work on the Office of National Statistics' Citizen Information Project; [147921]

(3) whether the Office for National Statistics' Citizen Information Project will cover information held by offices and agencies responsible to the Scottish Executive; [147922]

(4) which parts of the Citizen Information Project's current work programme includes matters of responsibility for the Scottish Executive; and what reporting procedures have been put in place for this work. [147923]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from John Pullinger to Ms Annabelle Ewing, dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions on the Citizen Information Project. I am replying in his absence. (147920, 147921, 147922, 147923).

The work announced by the Chief Secretary on 6 January is about the development of a UK population register. The aim is to cover the UK because a number of the public sector organisations (such as UK Passport Service, Inland Revenue) that might supply basic data to construct the register, and that are among the potential users of the register, cover the whole of the UK. The current work is on project definition, to explore more fully the potential scope of a register and to develop a more detailed proposal.

The Chancellor has not met Scottish Ministers to discuss this work, but the project team has been in close touch with the Registrar General for Scotland and Scottish Executive officials, who have kept Scottish Executive Ministers informed of developments. The Chief Secretary has corresponded with his Cabinet colleagues, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, on several occasions. The issue of how the register might be used and taken forward in Scotland will be considered during this next stage of the project. Should legislation be required, it would be for the Scottish Parliament to decide whether any register should be used to support the administration of devolved services.

The project team will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations, other government departments, agencies and local authorities. The Scottish Executive was represented, by the Head of its 21st Century Government Unit, on the Steering Group for the project's feasibility study. The Scottish Executive and the General Register Office for Scotland will be similarly involved in the governance of the current stage of the project.

No secondments of staff to the CEP team from any organisation have yet been arranged for the current stage of the project.

I am copying this letter to the Registrar General for Scotland.

Consumer Education

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total cross-government spending is on education for consumers on *(a)* financial services and *(b)* consumer credit, broken down by Department. [149449]

Ruth Kelly: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

We are, however, seeking to inform the work of the Financial Capability Steering Group, which informs policy development work by the Financial Services Authority, with a survey of the financial education, information and generic advice work of the principal Departments involved.

Council Tax

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on council tax increases for 2004–05 of the £406 million announced in the Pre-Budget statement for local authorities in Great Britain. [147714]

Mr. Boateng: The additional £406 million announced by the Chancellor includes £340 million for local authorities in England. This means that, including the additional resources announced at the time of the provisional local government finance settlement, the Government is making an additional £760 million in grant available for local authorities in England, over and above what the last spending review originally allocated. Total Government support next year will total £54.5 billion—up from £50.8 billion for 2003/04 on a like for like basis. That represents an increase, in real terms, of 30 per cent. in central government support since 1997 and is the second year in succession that all authorities have received an above inflation increase in government grant.

Taken together with the further £750 million reduction in ring fencing that we announced in November, the additional support being provided underlines the Government's commitment to ensuring that local authorities can provide decent local services without making excessive demands on local taxpayers.

The Government believes that next year local authorities can and should deliver council tax increases in low single figures. However, decisions on council tax levels are a matter for local authorities, in consultation with their local residents, not for the Government.

Decisions on local government funding in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the allocation of the additional resources provided by the Chancellor, are the responsibility of the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive, reflecting their own priorities and circumstances in the normal way.

Death Statistics

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of suicides in the UK in 2003. [148837]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Karen Dunnell to Mrs. Iris Robinson dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question concerning what estimate has been made of the number of suicides in the UK in 2003. I am replying in his absence. (148837)

The most recently available information is for deaths in 2002. There were 5,736 deaths[1] with a verdict of suicide or undetermined intent[2] in the United Kingdom in 2002.

[1] Data for England and Wales are for deaths occurring in the calendar year. Data for Scotland and Northern Ireland are for deaths registered in the calendar year.

[2] Causes of death were defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes X60-X84 and Y10-Y34 for Scotland and Northern Ireland, and X60-X84 and Y10-Y34 excluding Y33.9 where the Coroner's verdict was pending for England and Wales.

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many drownings there were in the UK in 2003. [148839]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Karen Dunnell to Mrs. Iris Robinson dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent question concerning how many drownings there were in the UK in 2003.1 am replying in his absence. (148839)

The most recently available information is for deaths in 2002. There were 646 deaths[1] from drowning[2] in the United Kingdom in 2002.

[1] Data for England and Wales are for deaths occurring in the calendar year. Data for Scotland and Northern Ireland are for deaths registered in the calendar year.

[2] Cause of death was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (1CD-10) code 775.7.

Economically Inactive Young People

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many economically inactive persons aged 18 to 24 there are; and what the number was in April 1997. [148851]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Mr. George Osborne, dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about economically inactive people aged 18 to 24. I am replying in his absence. (148851)

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) gives information about economic inactivity for each three month period, but not for individual months. The latest available estimate, for the three month period ending November 2003, is that there were 1.32 million economically inactive people aged 18 to 24 resident in the United Kingdom during this period. The estimate for the three month period ending April 1997 is 1.13 million. These estimates are seasonally adjusted.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to sampling variability.

European Council of Finance Ministers

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Ecofin meeting on 16 December 2003, including the Government's positions on the different issues discussed. [148614]

Ruth Kelly: The Ecofin meeting scheduled for 16 December 2003 was cancelled by the Italian Presidency.

Financial Services

Mr. Love: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what research has been commissioned on the impact of recent developments in the life assurance and pension industry on the capital structure of organisations offering such services; and if he will make a statement; [148759]

(2) what estimate he has made of the impact of changes in the reporting of the financial position of insurance companies on those that have a mutual structure; and if he will make a statement. [148855]

Ruth Kelly: The Financial Services Authority has developed a 'twin peaks' approach to the requirements for capital to support with-profits liabilities. This compares the capital required on a prudent regulatory basis with that needed on a realistic basis to meet payments made to policyholders, including terminal bonuses. The regulator will consider the impact on individual firms, including those that have a mutual structure, and on the industry as part of further development of its reserving proposals.

Mr. Love: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact that the Basel II accords on capital adequacy will have on mutual financial organisations; and if he will make a statement. [148760]

Ruth Kelly: The new Basel Accord will be an international agreement on prudential capital, applying mainly to internationally active banks. Implementation of the new Basel Accord in Europe will be through a new Capital Adequacy Directive, which is expected to have a broader scope covering credit institutions and investment firms (as was the case for the implementation of the existing Basel Accord). That broader scope will encompass some mutual organisations, for example building societies, although the detailed boundaries are yet to be determined. The Treasury will assess the European Commissions formal proposals in the usual way once they are issued.

Mr. Love: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact he estimates recent changes in the regulatory regime for insurance companies will have on *(a)* projections of future returns of policy holders and *(b)* the anticipated benefits of their mutual structure; and if he will make a statement. [148871]

Ruth Kelly: The rules governing projections for policyholders are set out in the Financial Services Authority Handbook under Conduct of Business. It is for individual companies to ensure that their projections are fair and not misleading. Recent changes to introduce

a new realistic reporting regime are intended to provide the regulator with a better picture of the underlying financial strength of the industry, including mutuals.

Income Tax

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the additional revenue which would be raised from a 1p increase in *(a)* the standard rate of income tax and *(b)* the higher rate of income tax; [148711]

(2) what estimate he has made of the additional revenue which a higher rate of income tax of 50 per cent. would produce. [148712]

Dawn Primarolo: I refer my hon. Friend to the publication "Tax ready reckoner and tax reliefs December 2003" on the Treasury website: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media//AAB247pbr03_trr.pdf. The figures exclude any estimate of behavioural response to the tax change.

Inland Revenue

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Inland Revenue inquiry offices have textphone or similar communication aids. [148382]

Dawn Primarolo: All Inland Revenue inquiry offices are registered with the BT Typetalk service.

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many home visits were conducted by Inland Revenue employees in each of the last five years to provide advice to those incapable of reaching an office. [148383]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue does not keep a central record of the total number of such visits going back over the last five years. The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to establish a disabilities helpline in the Inland Revenue for *(a)* tax payers and *(b)* voluntary sector intermediaries who need access to information on disability issues. [148384]

Dawn Primarolo: At present the Inland Revenue has no plans to establish a disabilities helpline. Advisers in our telephone contact centres are trained to deal with telephone calls from the full range of taxpayers. We believe that this provides a cost effective approach to meeting taxpayer needs and the flexibility to respond to the differing requirements of our taxpayer base.

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of public Inland Revenue offices are equipped with equipment to aid those with hearing impediments. [148386]

Dawn Primarolo: When last audited in early 2002, out of a total of 323 of Inland Revenue inquiry offices providing a face to face service, 86 per cent. had portable loop systems and 27 per cent. of them had fixed induction loop systems. We are in the process of carrying out another audit.

In spring 2003 Inland Revenue introduced a set of national standards for their inquiry offices specifying that they be equipped with a fixed and portable induction loop system, and a crystal listening device. They are progressing to all of their inquiry centres meeting this standard.

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Inland Revenue frontline staff have received training on disability issues. [148387]

Ruth Kelly: All new members of staff receive disability awareness material as part of the Revenue's induction process. In addition during the last three years 22,752 staff (over 32 per cent. of total staff) have attended a training course specifically covering disability issues.

During the same period over 90 per cent. of staff have received diversity awareness training which included disability related issues.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Inland Revenue office in Chorley is equipped with equipment to aid those with hearing impediments. [149168]

Dawn Primarolo: Chorley Inland Revenue Enquiry Office is equipped with portable induction loop equipment.

Insurance Cover (Terrorism)

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce an insurance scheme to cover domestic risks during times of terrorist attack. [147886]

Ruth Kelly: We do not currently have plans to introduce a Government insurance scheme to provide terrorism insurance for risks to domestic property.

IT Projects

Mr. Webb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each information technology project being undertaken by his Department and its agencies, including the *(a)* start date, *(b)* the planned completion date, *(c)* the current expected completion date, *(d)* the planned cost and *(e)* the current estimated cost; and if he will make a statement. [147654]

Ruth Kelly *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* A table containing the information requested has been placed in the Library of the House.

Leak Inquiries

Richard Ottaway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list occasions on which his Department has conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if he will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147194]

Ruth Kelly: While the Treasury has not itself instigated any formal leak enquiries since 1997, it does co-operate in cross-government preliminary enquiries at the request of other Government Departments attempting to trace the sources of leaked information.

In line with exemptions 1(a) and 7(b) set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the practice of successive governments not to comment on the outcome of such enquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

New Deal

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have benefited from the New Deal *(a)* broken down by region and *(b)* in Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East (i) since 1997 and (ii) since 2001. [148403]

Mr. Boateng: Since its introduction the New Deal has helped over 970,000 individuals into work. The following tables show the regional breakdown of jobs found through New Deal programmes. The first table shows data from the programmes introduction from June 1998 onwards, and the second table since April 2001. Both tables include the jobs gained from New Deal programmes for the constituency Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East.

Individuals into jobs since beginning of programmes

Jobs

	NDYP	ND25plus	NDLP	ND50+
Jobcentre Plus region				
Scotland	54,630	18,970	25,000	12,180
North East	36,920	11,780	14,760	6,360
North West	68,060	20,960	34,180	12,710
Yorkshire and Humber	53,060	18,440	24,720	10,660
Wales	31,870	9,180	16,260	7,290
West Midlands	46,860	15,450	19,830	9,940
East Midlands	29,330	10,250	14,230	7,290
East of England	25,550	10,590	14,930	6,880
South East	28,840	12,710	22,110	7,740
London	57,420	27,820	22,360	7,750
South West	30,210	10,970	20,860	9,180
Parliamentary constituency				
Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East	1,450	310	560	240

Individuals into jobs since April 2001

Jobs

	NDYP	ND25plus	NDLP	ND50+
Jobcentre Plus region				
Scotland	23,450	11,740	15,500	8,060
North East	15,770	6,540	8,650	4,390
North West	27,500	10,990	19,300	8,660
Yorkshire and Humber	20,860	9,860	14,520	6,990
Wales	13,480	4,570	10,250	4,820
West Midlands	20,020	9,140	11,500	6,780
East Midlands	12,060	5,570	8,330	4,940
East of England	9,150	5,100	8,590	4,380
South East	10,180	5,650	12,280	5,040
London	21,770	12,840	12,660	5,140
South West	11,520	5,890	12,830	5,770
Parliamentary constituency				
Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East	680	100	340	170

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) had helped over 20,000 disabled people into work since its introduction. New Deal for Partners has helped over 1,700 people into work, but due to the size of the programmes there is currently no regional or constituency breakdown available for either NDDP or NDP.

Research and Development Tax Credits

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many firms in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley (i) are benefiting and (ii) have benefited from research and development tax credits. [148704]

Dawn Primarolo: This information is not available. Claims for research and development tax credits do not disclose where in the UK research and development was performed.

Stamp Duty Land Tax

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the change in stamp duty land tax revenues in 2004-05 from *(a)* residential property, *(b)* commercial property, *(c)* anti tax avoidance measures and *(d)* securities-related transactions. [146424]

Ruth Kelly *[holding answer 8 January 2004]*: Forecast revenues from stamp taxes on Land and Property transactions and transactions in Shares are given in the table below. The forecast yields are consistent with the published PBR forecast. The yield from anti-avoidance measures was published in Table A2.1 of the Budget 2003 report.

£ million

	2003-04	2004-05
Stamp Duty	4,800	6,000
Stamp Duty Land Tax	2,700	3,300

The increase in duty on land transactions is in due to the introduction of Stamp Duty Land Tax on 1 December 2003. In particular this will:

(A) prevent the avoidance of stamp duty that was formerly common in commercial transactions, and

(B) charge duty on the grant of a new lease in a way that better reflects the economic and commercial reality'

Separate forecasts of yield for residential and commercial property are not available.

Unemployment (Chorley)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the change in the level of unemployment in the Chorley constituency has been since 1997. [148494]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Mr. Lindsay Hoyle dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about unemployment in the Chorley constituency. I am replying in his absence. (148494)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles statistics of unemployment from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) following the internationally standard International Labour Organisation definitions. For Parliamentary constituencies, information about unemployment rates, but not levels, is available. However, the LFS sample size is too small to give reliable estimates of unemployment in the Chorley constituency.

ONS also compiles statistics of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for local areas including Parliamentary constituencies. The annual average number of JSA claimants in the Chorley constituency decreased by 764 from 1,679 in 1997 to 915 in 2003.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on levels of unemployment in Chorley; and what the numbers were in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1995, *(c)* 2000 and *(d)* 2003. [149166]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Mr Lindsay Hoyle, dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about unemployment in the Chorley constituency. I am replying in his absence. (149166)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles statistics of unemployment from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) following the internationally standard International Labour Organisation definitions. For Parliamentary constituencies, information about unemployment rates, but not levels, is available for the twelve month period ending February of each year from 1997 to 2002. However, the LFS sample size is too small to give reliable estimates of unemployment in the Chorley constituency.

ONS also compiles statistics of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for local areas including Parliamentary constituencies. The table below shows the annual average claimant level in the Chorley constituency for the requested periods. Because of boundary changes the figures for 1990 and 1995 are not directly comparable with the later data.

People claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in the Chorley constituency

Year	*Level*
Annual average 1990	[1]2,159
Annual average 1995	[1]2,605
Annual average 2000	1,217
Annual average 2003	915

[1] Figures based on the 1981 census wards.

Unemployment (Middlesbrough)

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about levels of unemployment in Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East; and what the rates were in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1997 and *(c)* 2001. [148402]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Colin Mowl to Dr. Ashok Kumar dated 19 January 2004:

The National Statistician has been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about unemployment in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency. I am replying in his absence. (148402)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles statistics of unemployment from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) following the internationally standard International Labour Organisation definitions. For Parliamentary constituencies, information about unemployment rates, but not levels, is available. The unemployment rate in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency for the 12 month period ending February 2002 was 8.1 per cent. The LFS sample size is too small to give comparable information for 1997. LFS estimates are not available at Parliamentary constituency level for 1992. As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to sampling variability.

ONS also compiles statistics of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (ISA) for local areas including Parliamentary constituencies. The table following shows the average total level of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants and the percentage of the working age population in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland Constituency for 1997 and 2001. Comparable figures for 1992 are not available as the constituency did not exist in its current form at that time.

People claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency

	Number	[1] *Rate*
Annual average 1997	3,462	6.1
Annual average 2001	2,427	4.3

[1] People claiming Jobseeker's Allowance as a percentage of the 2001 Census working age population adjusted to 2001 mid-year population estimates for local authorities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Agreements

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the revision of the generalised system of preferences. [148517]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme has traditionally operated for a series of 10-year periods. While we are currently in the cycle for 1995–2004, revisions of the current scheme were agreed at the end of 2003. Details of these revisions can be found in *Official Journal* of the EU of 19 December 2003 and 31 December 2003 (Council Regulations No. 2211/2003 and 2331/2003 respectively). The main change was a one-year rollover, with amendments to the graduation criteria. This revised GSP scheme is therefore due to end on 31 December 2005. Proposals for a new GSP scheme will need to be agreed by 31 December 2004, thus providing EU importers with 12 months' notice to plan for changes to duty rates.

The Commission has indicated its intention to begin the renegotiation process of the EU GSP scheme early this year through regular working party meetings once initial proposals have been published. Officials from my Department will lead on the consultation across Whitehall and industry and, together with colleagues from the UK's Permanent Representation to the EU, make representations on behalf of the UK at these working party meetings. The proposals will be cleared through Parliament by Explanatory Memoranda in the usual way.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on progress with negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific States which are party to the Cotonou Agreement. [148518]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: As outlined in my answer to the hon. Member's question published on 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 696W, no Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) has yet been agreed between the EU and an ACP region. Phase 1 of the negotiations began in September 2002. But the EU only announced the launch of the first EPA negotiations with the Western and Central African regions—CEMAC

(Central African Economic and Monetary Community) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of Western African States) in October 2003. Launches of negotiations between the EU and other ACP regions are expected to take place later this year and to continue over several years. EPAs are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2008.

Aerospace Funding

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the funding of the Aerospace Launch Investment; and if she will break down the costs incurred by main budget head. [147805]

Jacqui Smith: Through Launch Investment partnerships the Government supports the design and development of civil aerospace projects in the UK. The information in the DTI's Departmental Report (CM 5916 published in May 2003) on the funding of the Aerospace—Launch Investment (page 85) indicates a working provision for 2002–03 of Payments of £258.2 million, Receipts (excluding Consolidated Fund Extra Receipt (CFER)) of £66.9 million and Total Receipts of £98.5 million. The actual outturn for 2002–03 was Payments of £258.2 million, Receipts (excluding CFER) of £80.7 million and Total Receipts of £109.5 million.

My Department is working closely with the industry in implementing the recommendations from the Aerospace Innovation and Growth Team (AeIGT), which reported on 11 June 2003. The Government will continue to consider applications for Launch Investment in conjunction with exploring with Industry ways to attract more private sector finance. Further information on the AeIGT can be found on the website of the Society of British Aerospace Companies at http ://www.sbac.co.uk/aeigt/.

BNFL Strategic Review

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to her written statement of 11 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 93WS, on the BNFL Strategy Review, what estimate she has made of the potential cost to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority which will result from that body taking responsibiilty for the clean-up of the Springfields site. [148531]

Mr. Timms: The White Paper "Managing the Nuclear Legacy", published in July 2002 indicated that the costs associated with clean up of civil nuclear liabilities at the Springfields site would be around £300 million. More detailed work to quantify the precise nature and extent of legacy liabilities at the site is under way to inform the future strategy for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Broadband

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions she has had with BT on reducing the trigger numbers required to roll out broadband in smaller market towns. [147914]

Mr. Timms: My colleagues and I maintain regular contact with BT across a wide range of issues as we do with other broadband providers. On 17 November 2003, BT announced trigger levels for 2,300 exchanges across the country. BT has also, on more than one occasion, reduced trigger levels which it had previously set. Decisions about which exchanges should be upgraded for ADSL or what trigger levels should be, are for telecommunication companies, such as BT, to make on commercial grounds.

Lowering of trigger levels may well be one of he benefits of public sector broadband demand aggregation, which is commencing region-by-region in the coming weeks.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will state the percentage coverage of broadband in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* each Lancashire district. [148416]

Mr. Timms: These data are not available within Government.

Cheese Industry

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with representatives of the cheese industry about the impact of the weakening dollar on the exports of UK-produced cheese; and if she will make a statement. [148175]

Alun Michael: I have been asked to reply.

The Secretary of State has had no formal meetings with representatives of the cheese industry about the impact of the weakening dollar on exports of UK produced cheese. However, Ministers and officials frequently meet representatives from all parts of the dairy supply chain and are therefore aware of the current difficulties facing UK exporters of cheese and other dairy products. Officials raised this issue with the European Commission at the Milk and Milk Products Management Committee on 15 January.

Coal Health

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been paid to date by the Department to solicitors for handling coal health claims, broken down by region. [147203]

Nigel Griffiths: To date the figures are as below.

£ million

	COPD solicitors costs	*VWF solicitors costs*
England	158.2	64.1
Scotland	14.1	4.6
Wales	54.8	10.2
Total	227.1	78.9

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the funding for *(a)* coal liabilities and *(b)* coal health liabilities was allocated

in 2003–04; and what amounts were allocated in each year since 1997. [147799]

Nigel Griffiths: The allocations, as set out in the Government's Expenditure Plans are:

£ million

	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–4
Coal Liabilities	226	131.6	1 16.8	209.6	179	131. 1	93. 3
Coal Health[1]	Inc. in above	123.2	228.2	648	829.5	850	850

[1] These figures are provisional allocations. There is no cap to the allocation of funding for coal health liabilities, as the Treasury would make available to the Departmen. whatever it takes to fund coal health claims.

Company Annual Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to bring forward legislation requiring companies to publish in their annual reports *(a)* a table showing the annual (i) pre-tax profits and (ii) tax paid in each country and *(b)* transfer prices for intergroup transactions. [146535]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Companies Act 1985 already requires companies to disclose their pre-tax profits and their tax charge split between UK and non-UK. There are no plans to change these requirements, or to introduce company reporting requirements on transfer pricing. Transfer pricing is taken account of in tax legislation.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment her Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire; and if she will make a statement; [146861]

(2) what assessment she has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146877]

(3) what assessment her Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in the Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if she will make a statement; [146890]

(4) what plans she has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in her Department to the regions; and if she will make a statement. [146920]

Ms Hewitt: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were employed by her Department in each year since 1992, broken down by Department. [148171]

Ms Hewitt: The Cabinet Office publishes statistics on Civil Service numbers showing staff in post figures going back to April 1990. These are available on their website: http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/statistics/archive-sip.htm

Employment Tribunals

Mr. Edward Davey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many employment tribunal cases in each year since 1999 took *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* nine months and *(d)* 12 months to issue a decision. [147005]

Mr. Sutcliffe *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* For each of the last four financial years, based on the information currently held in the Employment Tribunals Service's statistical database, the number of Employment Tribunal decisions recorded as having been issued three months or more after the hearing date were:

	(a) Three to six months	(b) Six to nine months	(c) Nine to 12 months	(d) 12+ months
1999–2000	94	17	6	17
2000–01	142	21	20	14
2001–02	150	32	4	6
2002–03	144	20	4	7

Source:
Employment Tribunals Service.

The Employment Tribunals Service (ETS) has a target to issue 85 per cent. of decisions within four weeks of the final hearing. In each of the last four financial years, ETS achieved the following percentages of decisions issued within that time:

	Percentage
1999–2000	84
2000–01	86
2001–02	83
2002–03	86

Source:
Employment Tribunals Service.

Engagements

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether she was in the United Kingdom for the whole of 13 January. [148722]

Ms Hewitt: Yes.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list her engagements for 13 January. [148723]

Ms Hewitt: I had a full programme of departmental and private appointments.

European Structural Funds

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the additionality requirements under the European Structural Funds regulations have been met by the UK Objective 1 programmes at their mid-term stage. [148434]

Jacqui Smith: There are no specific additionality requirements that have to be met under the European Structural Funds regulations at the mid-term point. The purpose of the mid-term verification exercise is to determine whether a member state's economic position has changed to the extent that some adjustment is required to its programmes.

As stated in my reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 701W, data supplied to the Commission in December for the UK Objective 1 programmes demonstrated that for each programme the average annual expenditure for the period 2000–02 was equal to or better than that forecast in the 2000–06 ex-ante tables published in the original Single Programming Documents for each Objective 1 area. As a result, there will be no need for adjustment of any of the Objective 1 programmes.

Fuel Poverty (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many fuel poor households there are in each district council area in Cambridgeshire; and what her estimate is of how many *(a)* children and *(b)* elderly people are living in fuel poor households. [146443]

Nigel Griffiths: The available information from the English House Condition Survey indicates that, in 2001, there were 139,000 fuel poor households in the Eastern Region. This is based on fuel poverty defined as occurring when a household needs to spend more than 10 per cent. of its income on all fuels in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime.

More detailed breakdowns within the Eastern Region are not available from this survey as the sample size is not large enough to enable reliable detailed estimates of fuel poverty at a more local level to be produced.

Gas Quality

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the written statement of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 13–14WS, on gas quality, what assessment she has made of the number of domestic appliances that would require *(a)* replacement and *(b)* modification as a consequence of change to the upper Wobbe Index limit for domestic gas supplies; and what assessment has been made of the cost of (i) processing and (ii) blending. [149222]

Mr. Timms: The Department is considering these important issues, working together with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Office for Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), and other interested parties, with a view to preparing the public consultation document referred to in my written parliamentary statement of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 13–14WS.

Industrial Disease

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the average full and final settlement paid to former miners and their families is for *(a)* vibration white finger and *(b)* chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; and how many settlements were less than (i) £1,000, (ii) £500 and (iii) £200. [147264]

Nigel Griffiths: To date the figures are:

Settlement value	*COPD*	*VWF*
Less than £1,000	21,418	2,647
Less than £500	9,475	193
Settlements less than £200	3,413	8
Average settlement value[1]	£7,729	£8,168

[1] Excludes denials.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of the full and final settlements for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease were reduced because of a smoking history; what percentage of the total number of such settlements this represents; and what the average value was of the reductions made. [147265]

Nigel Griffiths: As of mid January 2004 the number of full and final settlements reduced because of a smoking history is 59,993. This represents 64 per cent of total settlements.

Manufacturing Jobs

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many manufacturing jobs have been created in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley in each of the last three years. [148219]

Jacqui Smith: Although it is possible to give net change figures for manufacturing jobs in Lancashire and Chorley (see table) information about the number of jobs created is not kept in an easily accessible form. It is not therefore possible to answer this question accurately.

Total numbers of manufacturing jobs by year

	Chorley	*Lancashire*
2000	4,300	129,100
2001	3,800	117,600
2002	3,400	115,700

Miners' Compensation

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps her Department is taking to ensure the fastest possible completion of compensation payments to former miners for *(a)* chronic bronchitis and emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger. [146116]

Nigel Griffiths: The DTI is working closely with the medical assessment organisation, IRISC, (The Department's claims handlers), solicitors and other representatives of miners and their families to process and settle claims as quickly as possible. So far almost £2 billion has been paid to over 300,000 such miners, their widows and families.

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many solicitors firms are known to have charged additional fees, above agreed Government fees, for miners' compensation. [147762]

Nigel Griffiths *[holding answer 13 January 2004]:* On 18 December 2003 I wrote to all 515 firms of solicitors dealing with coal health claims, seeking clarification of whether they charged additional fees and asking those solicitors who had taken a proportion of miners' compensation to repay the money to claimants and their families. I have asked that they provide a response by the 23 January 2004.

To date I have received 160 replies, who all but one have confirmed that they do not double charge. We believe that certainly three other firms have been charging some additional fees, one of which has agreed to repay them.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the terms of the arrangements agreed are between her Department and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers with regard to the union's subsidiary company established to process claims under the miners' compensation scheme. [148287]

Nigel Griffiths: The term of the Claim Handling Agreement for all miners' compensation schemes are available in the Libraries of the House or on web.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether her Department has made representations to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers about the union's policy on charging legal fees for processing miners' compensation claims. [148288]

Mr. Timms: No, nor has the hon. Member ever asked me to.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to which organisations her Department wrote in December 2003 in relation to legal fees in the Miners' Compensation Scheme; and if she will publish the texts of the letters. [148289]

Nigel Griffiths: I have placed a copy of my letter in the Libraries of the House.

Mobile Phone Companies

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she last met the chief executives of *(a)* O2 and *(b)* Orange. [148159]

Mr. Timms: I last met with John Allwood CE Orange UK on 17 December 2003 and Dave McGlade CEO O2 on 18 November 2003. Officials meet regularly with both companies.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has not met on a one-to-one basis with either Chief Executive.

Nanotechnology

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is on the patenting of carbon molecules as part of nanotechnology development. [147226]

Ms Hewitt *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The policy relating to the patenting of carbon molecules in the field of nanotechnology is that the usual patentability criteria, including novelty, inventive step and industrial application, must be satisfied.

National Grid

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the maintenance work that needs to be carried out on the National Grid; and if she will hold meetings with National Grid Transco to discuss the matter. [148318]

Mr. Timms: National Grid's maintenance regime is being considered as part of the DTI's Engineering Inspectorate investigation into the major power failures in London on 28 August 2003 and in Birmingham on 5 September 2003. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry expects to meet with representatives from National Grid Transco shortly.

North West Regional Development Agency

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many businesses in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley have been helped by the North West Regional Development Agency. [148702]

Jacqui Smith: I have been advised by the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) Chief Executive that the NWDA does not monitor its outputs by sub region or town.

The NWDA are working with all Sub Regional Partnerships on a sub regional agenda to deliver the Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money from the North West Regional Development Agency has been spent in *(a)* Cumbria, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* Greater Manchester, *(d)* Merseyside and *(e)* Cheshire in each of the last three years. [148703]

Jacqui Smith: I have been advised by the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) Chief Executive that the NWDA does not allocate its funding on a sub-region basis. NWDA's total expenditure for the last three financial years was:

millions

Financial Year	*Expenditure*
2003–04	[1] 345
2002–03	306
2001–02	292

[1] Budget

Olympic Bid

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is on the Royal Mail donating money to London's Olympic bid. [147709]

Mr. Timms: The decision by Royal Mail to donate money to London's Olympic bid is an operational matter for the board of the company.

Parliamentary Debates

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the reasons for her decision not to respond to the debate on the future of the Post Office in Her Majesty's Official Opposition time initiated by the Shadow Secretary of State for Industry, the hon. Member for Eddisbury. [148724]

Ms Hewitt: Even though the debate was on an opposition motion, no Shadow Cabinet Minister was present on the opposition Front Bench, and there was therefore no automatic need for a Secretary of State to be present. On behalf of the Government, my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services made an excellent speech.

Personal Computers

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact of the £500 annual exemption from the taxable benefit on loaned personal computers introduced in the Finance Act 1999; and what steps are being taken to promote awareness of the exemption. [146140]

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

The information on which to make an estimate is not available. But on 19 January my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry launched a major campaign, the Home Computing Initiative, to encourage employers to take advantage of this exemption and lend computers to their employees.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the proportion of private sector employees who received computers as a result of employer-provided home computing initiatives in each year since 1997. [146141]

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available.

Post Office

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what talks she has had with trade unions over the future of the Post Office. [148417]

Mr. Timms: DTI Ministers and officials meet with union representatives on a regular basis to discuss a wide range of issues.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on *(a)* job losses in the Post Office and *(b)* the future of the Post Office. [148418]

Mr. Timms: Job losses in Royal Mail are an operational matter for the Board of Royal Mail in consultation with the unions. They are regrettable, but the Government accepts that cuts are necessary to stem company losses. The company is committed to achieving this through natural wastage, voluntary redundancy and redeployment of surplus staff within other parts of the business, under an agreement reached with the unions.

The company is now in year two of its three-year renewal programme to secure the future of the company. Progress is encouraging so far, but there is still some way to go. The Government is looking to the Royal Mail Board to drive through the renewal programme and return the company to profitability.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the future post office network in Chorley. [148645]

Mr. Timms: The Government remain fully committed to maintaining a nationwide network of post offices and have invested very substantial sums in supporting the modernisation of the network. I understand that Post Office Ltd. expects to put forward for public consultation its area plan proposals under the urban reinvention programme for Chorley constituency in February or March.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the answer given on 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 445W, on post offices, what changes there have been to *(a)* the number of post offices in each constituency and *(b)* the number which transact more than 40 per cent. of their work volumes on behalf of the Benefits Agency since 9 January 2003. [148782]

Mr. Timms: Post Office Ltd. updates annually its list by parliamentary constituency of post offices, classified as urban or rural. The most recent list available shows the position as at end April 2003 and a copy is available in the Libraries of the House.

A special exercise was undertaken by the Post Office in 1999 to determine the numbers of post offices in each parliamentary constituency and how many of them derive more than 40 per cent. of their income from benefits work. That information is set out in the reply given to the then hon. Member for Birmingham on 29 November 1999, *Official Report*, column 22W, and remains the latest information available in that form.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which post office branches in the 20 per cent. most deprived wards in England have *(a)* been the subject of a closure consultation, *(b)* had their proposal (i) modified and (ii) withdrawn after public consultation and *(c)* closed as a result of the Urban Reinvention Programme. [149179]

Mr. Timms: Decisions on post office closure proposals under the urban reinvention programme following public consultation are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which sub-postmasters of branches in the 20 per cent. most deprived wards in England have *(a)* applied for compensation to close their business and *(b)* been successful in their application; and how much has been paid to them to date. [149180]

Mr. Timms: Decisions on compensation to sub-postmasters are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Calton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what definition of contiguous population is used by the Post Office for classification of post offices as urban for the purposes of closure; and if she will make a statement. [149213]

Mr. Timms: The classification of a post office branch as urban or rural is an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. Mapped contiguous built up areas with a population exceeding 10,000 are classified by the company as urban. The company uses a geographical mapping model that enables it to adopt a consistent approach to classification across the country.

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when sub-post offices in Taunton will learn whether they will be considered for closure under the network re-invention programme. [148506]

Mr. Timms: I understand from Post Office Ltd. that urban reinvention area plan proposals for Taunton are scheduled for June 2004.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations she has made to the Scottish clearing banks about their participation in the Post Office Universal Bank. [148750]

Mr. Timms: As a result of the Secretary of State's discussions with the clearing banks to set up universal banking at the Post Office, the major financial institutions, including the Scottish clearing banks, agreed to provide access at post offices to their basic bank accounts. Those services were launched on schedule on 1 April 2003.

Access to other current accounts at post offices is a commercial matter between the Post Office and individual banks. It is Post Office Ltd. strategy to increase access to banking services. The Government would urge all banks to provide their customers with access to their accounts through post offices. But the decision to do so rests with the individual institutions.

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many rural sub-post offices closed in *(a)* England and *(b)* Somerset in each quarter in each of the last three years. [148505]

Mr. Timms: Post Office Ltd. maintain net quarterly closure figures by region/country, not by county and local authority. Decisions on post office closures are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Regional Development Agencies

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what mechanisms are in place for evaluating the performance of projects undertaken by regional development agencies. [146152]

Jacqui Smith: All RDA projects have to be appraised within the rules of Government Accounting and Treasury's "Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government" Guide (The Green Book).

To supplement this higher level guidance, the Department has worked closely with RDAs, other Departments and the Office of Project Appraisal Training to produce the "Single Programme Appraisal Guidance". The guidance covers project appraisal and evaluation of completed projects. The appraisal itself must contain an evaluation plan specific to the project, and after the project is completed, the RDA to carry out a formal evaluation and report the results. In addition, DTI has reserved the right to call in any project for post appraisal and implementation monitoring. Now that RDAs have been in operation for four years, significant numbers of projects are entering their evaluation stages.

To ensure compliance with the guidance, each RDA has a project performance and evaluation team of senior officers who are tasked with determining the success of the project, to identify lessons to be incorporated into other projects and to improve processes.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria are used to measure the *(a)* success and *(b)* effectiveness of regional development agencies. [148192]

Jacqui Smith: The Regional Development Agencies; funding is tied to a framework of targets relating to their functions, and responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards achievement of these targets sits with the Government Office in each region. Their reports provide Ministers with the information required to measure the success and effectiveness of RDAs by assessing their progress towards achievement of targets and delivery of their Regional Economic Strategies and Corporate Plans.

Research and Development Tax Credits

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new *(a)* products, *(b)* services and *(c)* processes have been developed by firms benefiting from the introduction of research and development tax credits in each year since their introduction. [148183]

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not available. Companies are not required to agree specific products or processes in advance with the Inland Revenue in order to claim research and development tax credits. So far there have been 8,000 claims and over 6,000 companies have benefited from research and development tax credits.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been spent on research and development tax credits in each quarter since their introduction. [148184]

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

The available data on the cost of the research and development tax credits provided to SMEs, by quarter, are set out as follows. The costs are on a receipts basis, showing when the cost has been incurred by the Inland Revenue, we expect costs in the latest quarters to increase as further claims are received. Information on claims from large companies is not yet available.

	£
2000	
Q2	6,297
Q3	747
Q4	73,685
2001	
Q1	913,963
Q2	5,087,103
Q3	12,857,568
Q4	23,443,820
2002	
Q1	29,210,686
Q2	44,627,755
Q3	47,382,286
Q4	66,392,398
2003	
Q1	75,042,704
Q2	69,326,644
Q3	67,097,095

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies have benefited from research and development tax credits in each quarter since their introduction. [148185]

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

We do not have figures for the number of companies that have claimed the research and development tax credit by quarter, although we had over 8,000 individual claims and over 6,000 individual companies have benefited since the tax credits were introduced. The available figures for the number of claims received from SME's so far for research and development tax credits, by quarter, are set out as follows. Information on claims from large companies is not yet available. Claims are made by companies retrospectively and therefore we expect the number of claims in later quarters to increase further as more claims as received.

	Number
2000	
Q2	185
Q3	271
Q4	644
2001	
Q1	668
Q2	530
Q3	589
Q4	1,219
2002	
Q1	936
Q2	767
Q3	766
Q4	1,195
2003	
Q1	434
Q2	143
Q3	27

Post Offices

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the progress of *(a)* the network reinvention programme and *(b)* the rural subsidy for sub-post offices. [146486]

Mr. Timms: Post Office Ltd. (POL) reports on the urban reinvention programme on a quarterly basis. As at the end of December 2003:

694 offices had closed under the programme (with payments to sub-postmasters totalling £38,111,410);

46 proposals had been withdrawn or delayed for reworking during the advance notification process agreed with the consumer body Postwatch;

a further 66 proposals had been withdrawn or amended as a result of the public consultation. POL had approved 388 applications totalling £1.3 million for investment grants to modernise remaining post offices.

Regarding the rural subsidy, which I announced on 2 December 2003, this is in place and is being drawn down by Post Office Ltd. to underpin its obligation to maintain the rural network and prevent avoidable closures. £450 million has been made available over three years (2003–04, 2004–05 and 2006). This funding is having the desired impact with rural closures much reduced; the lowest number since 1994–95. There were 115 net closures in the financial year 2002–03

Call Centres

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government support is available for the setting up of call centres, with particular reference to rural areas. [146487]

Mr. Timms: There is no specific Government support for the setting up of call centres in rural areas. However there is a range of business support available in certain circumstances including regional selective assistance (RSA). RSA is available to support investment and the creation or safeguarding of jobs in the assisted areas for viable projects that benefit regional and national economies and which without RSA would not go ahead.

The DTI invests £1 billion a year in support of business and of that sum £400–500 million is spent on business support schemes. RSA with an annual budget of £110 million is one of the largest business support schemes. Our aim is to use this money in a way that ensures the best possible return on investment for the UK and makes a real difference to business performance.

Small Business

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will break down how funding allocated as other support for small business has been awarded in 2003–04; and what amounts were allocated in each year since 1997. [147794]

Nigel Griffiths: I refer the hon. Member to Chapter 8 of the DTI Departmental Report 2003(Cm 5916) which

sets out expenditure on small business programmes as a whole; and in particular to figure 8.5 on page 104 of that report (reproduced below). The figures in the table below incorporate those in Annex Bl on page 207 of the Report, including funding allocated as Other Support for Small Business.

Figure 8.5 Expenditure on small business and enterprise Main estimates 2003–04 RfRl Functions A, M and V (promotion of enterprise, innovation and productivity)

£ million

	2001–02 Outturn	*2002–03 Working Provision*	*2003–04 Plans*	*2004–05 Plans*	*2005–06 Plans*
Small Business Service (and corresponding earlier activity)	274.8	423.4	404.8	367.0	387.0
Of which: Local Network[1]	141.2	143.4	144.0	144.0	144.0
Farm Business Advice Service (gross)	4.8	7.5	2.3	0	0
Business Link call handling and website	9.2	21.4	12.0	12.0	12.0
Business .Gov	0	6.3	7.7	15.0	35.0
Phoenix Fund	12.9	35.0	30.0	25.0	25.0
DTI spend on TCS and STEP	13.7	17.2	18.5	18.5	18.5
Enterprise Fund (including SFLGS net)	39.2	93.9	87.5	87.5	87.5
Smart	23.7	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0
Enterprise Grants	0	17.0	24.0	24.0	24.0
Business Incubation Fund	0	20.0	25.0	0	0
Other Support	30.1	34.7	26.8	14.0	14.0

[1] The Local Network includes Start-ups; Core Services funding; and Local Network Development.

Similar information on expenditure on small business and enterprise is contained within corresponding reports for earlier years (Cm 5416; Cm 5112; Cm 4611; Cm 4211), although direct comparisons may be inappropriate due to departmental reorganisation. The outturn for those years was as follows:

£ million

1997–98 Outturn	*1998–99 Outturn*	*1999–00 Outturn*	*2000–01 Outturn*
171.3	152.0	194.1	277.2

Spectrum Efficiency Scheme

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will break down how funding for the Spectrum Efficiency Scheme has been allocated since the scheme's inception; and what amounts have been allocated in each year since 1997. [147793]

Mr. Timms: Arrangements for the Spectrum Efficiency Scheme were agreed between DTI and Treasury in 2002. Only one year of funding for 2003–04 was agreed at the time owing to the transfer of the Radiocommunications Agency's functions into Ofcom.

The Spectrum Efficiency Scheme had an annual budget of £5 million in 2003–04 as agreed in the 2000 Spending Review. There are two components to this budget; (1) compensation payments for spectrum replanning and (2) research.

No compensation payments were made during 2003–04 but research contracts were let to the value of £2,866,000.

Details of the contracts awarded in 2003–04 are available on the Ofcom website(http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/ra/rahome.hto

A call for expressions of interest in the research element of the 2004–05 Spectrum Efficiency Scheme has just been announced by Ofcom. The budget of £5 million is expected to be shared between compensation payments for spectrum replanning, and research.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people employed in her Department have claimed statutory sick pay for *(a)* less than one week, *(b)* one to three weeks, *(c)* four to six weeks, *(d)* seven to 12 weeks, *(e)* 13 to 20 weeks and *(f)* 21 to 28 weeks in each year since 1997. [148633]

Ms Hewitt: The work involved for my Department to gather the requested information would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

The recent AON Limited report "Analysis of Sickness Absence in the Civil Service, 2002" is a useful source of reference for some sickness absence data.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the volume of United Kingdom trade has been with *(a)* Singapore, *(b)* Thailand, *(c)* Malaysia, *(d)* Vietnam, *(e)* Cambodia and *(f)* Laos in each of the last five years. [148218]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The information is in the following table.

UK trade in goods with Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos January to October

£ million

Country	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
UK exports						
Singapore	1,615	1,604	1,627	1,604	1,459	1,288
Thailand	391	466	581	596	532	469
Malaysia	683	940	910	1,033	882	892
Vietnam	68	79	93	90	80	88
Cambodia	6	4	4	3	4	3
Laos	2	5	4	2	2	3
UK imports						
Singapore	2,463	2,451	2,485	2,146	2,031	2,306
Thailand	1,329	1,347	1,661	1,669	1,608	1,395

UK trade in goods with Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos January to October

£ million

Country	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
Malaysia	1,991	2,040	2,374	2,012	1,796	1,586
Vietnam	244	306	385	428	488	501
Cambodia	24	43	55	85	89	81
Laos	5	9	5	7	10	7

Source:

Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, HM Customs and Excise.

Vehicle Exports

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with representatives of the car industry on exports of UK built *(a)* cars, *(b)* vans and *(c)* trucks. [148419]

Jacqui Smith: I have frequent discussions with individual automotive manufacturers and with the SMMT, covering a broad range of issues touching on the competitiveness of the automotive industry, including those which impact on exports. It has been pleasing to see that manufacturers in the UK have in general been very successful in improving their export performance over recent years, often in markets which have been particularly tough.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the number of new UK built *(a)* cars, *(b)* vans and *(c)* trucks exported in each of the last three years. [148473]

Jacqui Smith: A breakdown of UK vehicle production for export is attached. The light commercial vehicle figure comprises vans, and also van-derived minibuses. Full figures for 2003 are yet to be published, but the table includes an estimate based on published data to end-November.

	Cars	*Light CVs*	*Heavy CVs*	*Buses*
2000	1,062,990	71,667	4,220	294
2001	894,204	91,127	4,776	321
2002	1,047,668	109,308	4,702	225
2003 estimate	1,137,000	96,700	4,200	200

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the members of the World Trade Organisation, broken down by the size of their *(a)* gross domestic product and *(b)* per capita income. [146643]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government do not produce their own data on these categorisations, but instead draw on publicly available information produced by international organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank. I will write to the hon. Member enclosing this information and will place a copy of the letter in both Libraries of the House.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Fines

Mr. Forth: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) what his estimate is of the revenue cost as a result of *(a)* unpaid and *(b)* uncollected fines in the last five years; [147966]

(2) what proportion of fines were not *(a)* paid and *(b)* collected in the last five years. [147967]

Mr. Leslie: Information on fines imposed and collected is provided by the 42 Magistrates Courts Committees (MCCs) in England and Wales. A new data collection procedure was implemented in 1999–2000. Comparable figures are therefore only available from that period, and are set out in the table.

In addition, last year, I agreed to a revision of the enforcement payment rate target so that it focuses clearly on fines.

The April to November row of the table sets out year-to-date performance on the basis of the new formula which excludes other financial penalties such as confiscation orders.

England and Wales

Period	*Total imposed*	*Total paid*	*Payment rate (%)* [1]	*Total arrears outstanding* [2]
1999–2000	431,111,249	267,326,873	62	227,361,076
2000–01	384,958,059	242,455,701	63	225,908,941
2001–02	387,020,885	228,122,287	59	246,481,521
2002–03	425,863,782	236,320,110	55	276,870,306
April-November 2003	247,135,001	139,353,460	72	[3]—

[1] Payment rate percentage for periods 1999–2000, 2000–01, 2001–02, and 2002–03 was based on amount paid divided by new amount owed. For the period April-November 2003 as a result of the Minister's statement on 25 June 2003 the payment rate has changed to: amount paid divided by new amount owed less amount judicially cancelled. Therefore a direct comparison can not be made between the payment rate for April-November 2003 and previous years.

[2] Total arrrears outstanding includes arrears outstanding from previous years

[3] Total arrears outstanding for the Year to Date ending November 2003 is not currently available

Mr. Syms: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what proportion of fines levied by the courts were collected in full in the last year for which figures are available. [148335]

Mr. Leslie: Information on fines imposed and collected is provided by the 42 Magistrates Courts Committees (MCCs) in England and Wales. Figures for the financial year 2002–03 are set out in the table.

In addition, last year, I agreed to a revision of the enforcement payment rate target so that it focuses clearly on fines.

The April to November row of the table sets out year-to-date performance on the basis of the new formula which excludes other financial penalties such as confiscation orders.

England and Wales

Period	Total imposed	Total paid	Payment rate %[1]	Total arrears outstanding[2]
2002–03	425,863,782	236,320,110	55	276,870,306
April-November 2003	247,135,001	139,353,460	72	[3]—

[1] Payment rate percentage for 2002–03 is based on amount paid divided by new amount owed. For the period April-November 2003 as a result of the Minister's statement on 25 June 2003 the payment rate has changed to: amount paid divided by new amount owed less amount judicial cancelled. Therefore a direct comparison can not be made between the payment rate for April-November 2003 and previous years.

[2] Total arrrears outstanding includes arrears outstanding from previous years

[3] Total arrears outstanding for the Year to Date ending November 2003 is not currently available

Immigration Appellate System

Mr. Crausby: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what the cost was in each of the last five years of the administration of the Immigration Appellate System. [147783]

Mr. Lammy: The costs of the administration of the Immigration Appellate system in each of the last five years are as follows:

	£ million
1998–99	[1]67.3
1999–2000	[1]77.5
2000–01	116.8
2001–02	181.1
2002–03	269.8

[1] The costs of administration of the Immigration Appellate System for these years are estimates. Detailed financial reporting information was not available to capture the full cost of administering the process.

These figures include the cost of administering the Immigration Appellate Authority, the Legal Services Commission, provision of legal aid and the Department for Constitutional Affairs Asylum Policy and Programme Division.

The rising costs reflect a significantly increased caseload (reflecting the clearance of the backlog of cases) and the Government priority that has been given to fast and effective processing of asylum claims—in order to ensure the end to end system is as cost effective as possible.

Access to Justice

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what measures are being taken to increase access to justice for the disadvantaged. [146667]

Mr. Lammy: Since the introduction of the Community Legal Service (CLS) in 2000, it has improved access for those who are financially eligible to good quality civil legal and advice services. In many areas local CLS providers have linked up with other government programmes jointly to help people climb out of social exclusion.

Spending on the CLS in 2002–03 totalled £814 million and is expected to rise to £913 million for 2003–04. The eligibility criteria for assistance and the identification of priority unmet need within CLS Partnership Strategic Plans ensure that help is given to those most in need.

For the Criminal Defence Service (CDS), the Legal Services Commission manages contracts with solicitors' offices which provide a comprehensive national network of quality assured legal services. It has established a Public Defender Service in eight offices. Outside the major urban areas, and particularly in rural areas, the Commission continues to provide CDS arrangements which support and encourage supply in ways which recognise the need for access to quality services. Spending on the CDS in 2002–03 totalled £1,095.7 million and is expected to rise to £1,202.9 million for 2003–04.

My Department and the Commission, with the help of independent consultants, is carrying out a major review of the CLS, including an examination of the extent to which the CLS ensures access to justice, and a review of supply, demand and purchasing arrangements for both the CLS and the CDS. We hope to publish the findings on the reviews soon.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what steps the Department is taking to ensure access to justice. [146675]

Mr. Lammy: My Department, together with the Legal Services Commission, continues to develop the Community Legal Service (CLS). The CLS ensures that publicly funded legal services are targeted more effectively at areas of priority need as identified at a local level by Community Legal Service Partnerships. Since the launch of the CLS in April 2000 more than 200 Community Legal Service Partnerships have been set up, covering more than 99 per cent. of the population of England and Wales. Spending on the CLS in 2002–03 totalled £814 million and is expected to reach £913 million in 2003–04.

For the Criminal Defence Service the Legal Services Commission manages contracts with solicitors' offices which provide a comprehensive national network of quality assured legal services. It has established a Public Defender Service in eight offices. Outside the major urban areas, and particularly in rural areas, the Commission continues to provide CDS arrangements which support and encourage supply in ways which recognise the need for access to quality services. Spending on the CDS in 2002–03 totalled £1,095.7 million and is expected to rise to £1,202.9 million for 2003–04.

My Department and the Commission, with the help of independent consultants, is carrying out a major reviews of CLS, including an examination of the extent to which the CLS ensures access to justice and of supply, demand and purchasing arrangements for both the CLS and the CDS. We hope to be able to publish the findings on the reviews in due course.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what the funding allocation for video equipment in courts was for each of the last seven years; and by what percentage it changed in each of those years relative to the proceeding year. [147675]

Mr. Leslie: Prior to 2000, funding for video equipment was provided from local budgets and there is no central record of overall expenditure.

My Department spending on video equipment for prison links vulnerable and intimidated witness cases, electronic presentation of evidence cases and playback of police interviews is shown in the following table.

	Amount (£)	*Percentage change*
2000–01	1,350,000	—
2001–02	5,170,000	+282
2002–03	2,950,000	−42
2003–04	5,700,000	+93

Courts Service

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what system is in place within the Department to ensure that concerns about practical issues impacting negatively on the business of courts from those judges responsible for modernisation in the courts are brought to the attention of the relevant Minister and responded to accordingly. [147667]

Mr. Leslie: The Secretary of State and Ministers meet senior members of the judiciary periodically, and modernisation issues are among those discussed.

In addition, we have agreed and put in place detailed consultation arrangements with the judiciary to ensure their views are reflected fully in the modernisation programme. I am briefed by officials on issues arising from these consultations.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) what assessment the Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146859]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146875]

(3) what assessment the Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in the Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146889]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in the Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146919]

Mr. Leslie: I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Ms Walley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many staff in the Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146904]

Mr. Leslie: The Department and its agencies (the Court Service and the Public Guardianship Office) employs:

(a) 689 staff in West Midlands, of which 49 are casual employees and

(b) 159 staff in Staffordshire of which eight are casual employees.

Electoral Fraud

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many applications for entry on the electoral register have been found to be fraudulent since 1997. [148725]

Mr. Leslie: This information is not collected centrally. In its report on the electoral registration process, published in May 2003, the independent Electoral Commission commented that the number of electoral fraud prosecutions in Great Britain is small.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs in how many speeches during 2003 *(a)* he and *(b)* the Secretary of State declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147300]

Mr. Leslie: I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Gender Recognition

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what recent steps the Department has taken to promote gender recognition. [146668]

Mr. Lammy: The Department for Constitutional Affairs is responsible for Government policy on transsexual people and for the Gender Recognition Bill. The Bill, which was introduced in the House of Lords on 27 November, will see the advancement of the rights of transsexual people by giving them legal recognition in their acquired gender. From the inception in 1999 of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Transsexual People the Government have been careful to take into account the views of all those with an interest in transsexual issues, supporters and opponents. Transsexual people are a small minority group in our society and the issues around the recognition of an acquired gender are often unfamiliar to those not directly affected. Accordingly, the Government have worked closely with individual transsexual people and their representative organisations to better understand the issues and to ensure that the Bill strikes a sensible balance between their rights and the rights of others. The Department's promotion of gender recognition issues has been limited to correspondence and meetings with the transsexual community and those who have

expressed views on Transsexual policy and the Bill. My Department will continue to ensure that it regularly updates its website on transsexual issues, including the Gender Recognition Bill.

Immigration Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Bacon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will make a statement about the Government's proposals for the judicial review of the decisions of immigration appeal tribunals. [148336]

Mr. Lammy: The Government has introduced measures in the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants Etc) Bill to establish a new single Asylum and Immigration Tribunal. This will merge the two current tiers of appeal in asylum and immigration cases. The judicial determinations and decisions made by the new Tribunal will be final and can only be challenged in the higher courts on the grounds that a Tribunal Member has acted in bad faith.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs whether a case remitted by the Immigration Appeals Tribunal may be returned to the original adjudicator. [147852]

Mr. Lammy: Pursuant to Rule 22 of the Immigration and Asylum Appeals (Procedure) Rules 2003, the Immigration Appeal Tribunal may direct a remitted appeal to be returned to the original adjudicator to determine in accordance with any directions given by the tribunal.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what proportion of appeals remitted back from the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to the adjudicators in 2002–03 were subsequently upheld by adjudicators. [147853]

Mr. Lammy: Statistical assessment of cases remitted by the tribunal to the adjudicators indicates that in approximately 25 per cent. of remitted asylum cases this leads to the initial adjudicator decision being changed. Between 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003 (the last full year for which information is available) this equates to 1.6 per cent. of all adjudicator asylum decisions having a different outcome following remittal and re-hearing.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what the possible outcomes of the remittal process are, with respect to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal. [147854]

Mr. Lammy: Once an appeal has been remitted from the Immigration Appeal Tribunal to the adjudicator tier of the Immigration Appellate Authority the appeal is most commonly heard by a different adjudicator, or more rarely, by the original adjudicator. The possible outcomes from the remittal process are for the appeal to be allowed, to be dismissed or withdrawn by the appellant. Following a fresh adjudicator determination, parties again have rights to seek permission to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs in what circumstances appeals are remitted back from the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to the adjudicators; what guidance is given to the tribunal on remittals; and what training tribunal members have had on remittals. [147865]

Mr. Lammy: Appeals are remitted from the Immigration Appeal Tribunal when a defect in the original adjudicator determination is revealed which the Tribunal cannot correct itself. The President of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal has not issued a formal Practice Direction relating to the remittal of appeals, but Tribunal members will take the decision to remit a case where there is no practicable alternative. Decisions are taken in the light of the overriding objective in rule 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Appeals (Procedure) Rules 2003: "to secure the just, timely and effective disposal of appeals and applications in the interests of the parties to the proceedings and in the wider public interest". Training for Tribunal judiciary includes reference to the application of procedural rules and guidance.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what proportion of appeals which are *(a)* successful, *(b)* dismissed, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* remitted back to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal are (i) appeals by asylum claimants and (ii) appeals by immigration authorities. [148017]

Mr. Lammy: At the adjudicator asylum appeal, the two parties are the asylum seeker and the Home Secretary (as the initial decision-maker). Either party can apply for permission to appeal to the Tribunal and, if permission is granted, the appeal will be substantively determined. As either party can appeal, "allowed" and "dismissed" at the Tribunal do not equate to the grant or refusal of asylum.

In 2002, the Immigration Appeals Tribunal substantively determined 5,565 asylum appeals. The information requested is contained in the table below and is taken from the published Home Office asylum statistics. These figures are provisional and rounded to the nearest five. Certain elements of information relating to remitted appeals are not available and this is indicated where appropriate:

Appeals

Tribunal outcome	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*	*Remitted*
Total	620	2,015	225	2,700
Proportion by asylum claimant	410	1,880	210	[1]—
Proportion by Home Office	215	130	15	[1]—

[1] Not available.

Late Fine Payments

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) what plans he has to impose automatic sentences on those who are overdue in paying fines by a set period; [147839]

(2) what plans he has to impose automatic sentences on those who persistently fail to pay fines imposed by magistrates courts. [147840]

Mr. Leslie: There are no automatic "sentences" for fines. However the Courts Act, 2003 provides a number of new arrangements to facilitate the enforcement of fines, including mandatory automatic attachment of earnings orders if the defendant is in employment, or deductions from social security benefits if they are not working which will be applied upon first default. The Act introduces "fines officers" (who will have delegated powers), an automatic increase (to a maximum 50 per cent. of the fine) for continued non-payment of the fine, and a range of new sanctions as further steps for non-payment. These include clamping the defaulter's car and registration of the fine in a new combined register of judgments and fines. There will also be new offences for not providing means information or for providing false information to the court or fines officer. The increase and new sanctions will be piloted in six local pilot areas in a phased rollout from 23 February 2004. The new mandatory application of the Attachment of Earnings Orders and Deductions from Benefits will be piloted nationwide, together with the rollout of the new offences for non-provision of means information from 5 April 2004. Where the court is satisfied that an offender is genuinely unable to pay a fine, schedule 6 of the Courts Act introduces the alternative new sentence of fines payment work, where an offender can work off the value of the fine through unpaid work. This new provision will also be piloted in selected local pilot areas from 5 April 2004.

Persistent offenders fined in the new fines collection scheme provided by schedule 5 of the Courts Act, 2003 will be deemed "existing defaulters" (defined in paragraph 3 of schedule 5) if they have already defaulted on previous fines payments. They will be subject to automatic mandatory attachment of earnings orders (if they are employed) or deductions from benefits (if they are in receipt of benefits) upon conviction. If they default on the current fine as well, they will be subject to an increase (up to a maximum of 50 per cent.) of the fine which will only be disapplied if they stick to the required payment terms for the life of the fine. These defaulters will then be subject to the same range of further steps as the new defaulters in question (1) above, with the ultimate threat of imprisonment for wilful non-payment of the fine.

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will make a statement on the Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether the Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries the Department has outsourced these jobs; how much the Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147594]

Mr. Leslie: My Department has a number of contracts for the provision of outsourced IT and call centre services, none of which is based or supported offshore.

No money has been spent in the last two years on outsourcing IT systems to offshore companies, and no money has been budgeted for this purpose in the next two years.

My Department will keep the position under review, in the light of any emerging Government policy, as part of its overall aim to ensure that its procurement activities are based on obtaining best value for money.

Video Equipment

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) how many complaints have been received from *(a)* judges, *(b)* barristers and *(c)* parties to a case about the quality of video equipment and its impact on the quality of evidence in a case; [147666]

(2) what action is taken in the event that a judge raises concerns that the quality of video equipment is impacting on the balance of relative quality of evidence on a recurring basis within courtrooms; [147668]

(3) what evidence the Department has received that poor video links are affecting the quality of prosecution evidence. [147674]

Mr. Leslie: My Department does not specifically monitor or record complaints about video playback or video link equipment. My Department has received no formal complaints to date about the quality of the equipment. Maintenance contracts are in place with the suppliers to provide after installation support should any difficulties with the equipment be encountered. Any complaints or difficulties over the quality of the equipment will be referred by the court to the suppliers.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what system of monitoring is in place for parties in a case to report concerns about the quality of video equipment provided to courts. [147670]

Mr. Leslie: A Judicial Advisory Group, comprising judiciary from the Crown court, magistrates courts, county courts and tribunals, has been established to review and provide feedback on courtroom technology. This group meets on a regular basis and represents the views of the judiciary on matters such as video equipment.

The legal profession and members of the public can also use the complaints and customer service procedures, which are publicised at each court.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs on what quality criteria video equipment is chosen for use in cases which involve vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. [147671]

Mr. Leslie: The Judicial Advisory Group has been consulted about the specification for video equipment installed in Crown court centres. The Department is working with other Criminal Justice organisations to develop a standard for visual recording and playback across the Criminal Justice system. The standard is due to be published at the end of January 2004.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how the video equipment selected for pre-trial hearings differs from that selected for criminal trials; and what criteria are used for this selection. [147672]

Mr. Leslie: The video equipment installed in 30 Crown court sites during 2003 can be used for pre-trial hearings and during criminal trials.

Voter Registration

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what steps are taken to ensure that only bona fide constituents are registered on the electoral roll. [148735]

Mr. Leslie: Applications for registration are made to individual Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), appointed by local authorities, who are responsible for compiling the electoral register as accurately as possible. The annual canvass form which is sent to all households provides information about who is eligible to register. An ERO may require a person applying to register to give additional information if they are in doubt as to whether that person is eligible to be registered. It is an offence under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to fail to comply with a request for information from an ERO, or to provide false or inaccurate information to a registration officer. The electoral register is available for public inspection which enables checks to be made that only eligible electors are on the register.

HEALTH

Acute Hospital Trusts

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute hospital trusts suspend out-patient waiting lists at less than 21 weeks. [147188]

Mr. Hutton: This information is not available.

Ambulance Service (Radio Network)

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the competition for a new national radio network for the ambulance service. [147806]

Ms Rosie Winterton: An *Official Journal* of the European Commission Notice, issued in June 2002, invited suppliers to express an interest to provide a new digital radio network and associated hardware. This was separated into four "lots", which together would provide the complete new service for the ambulance service.

18 expressions of interest were received. Following a short evaluation, eight were invited to respond to an output based specification. Following this exercise, four responses were received, one of which dropped out soon after. From the remaining three, only one supplier was able to provide Lot 1 (digital infrastructure), while all three were able to provide Lot 2 (Fixed and Hand Portable Radios), Lot 3 (Control Room Dispatcher Equipment) and Lot 4 (Total Integration of all Lots at Ambulance Trusts).

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the Government will ensure that usable spectrum is available to bidders competing to provide a new national radio network for the ambulance service. [147811]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Radiocommunications Agency (RA), as the spectrum manager for public safety spectrum, has been working hard to meet ever increasing demands placed on the finite spectrum resource.

The radio spectrum available to the emergency services was a matter for the Public Safety Spectrum Policy Group (PSSPG).

The PSSPG published guidance in order to assist interested parties in identifying available public safety spectrum and advising as to other issues that should be taken into account. This was the case with the Ambulance Service procurement exercise. It is recognised that only the 380–385 MHz and 390–395 MHz spectrum is in the harmonised format for digital technologies and all of this is required in spectrum 'hot spots' to meet the existing airwave requirement. While spectrum in this band is available on a carefully co-ordinated regional basis, it was considered that the capacity to meet a second national network that can be planned and protected to meet the exacting requirements of public safety did not exist.

Antibiotics

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what English acute NHS hospitals do not have antibiotic pharmacists in post. [147508]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Autism

Mr. Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the incidence of autism in children who were vaccinated with the combined measles, mumps and rubella vaccine *(a)* before attaining the age of three and *(b)* after attaining the age of three. [145185]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]:* In the last few years a number of epidemiological studies have examined the postulated link between MMR and autism and have found no association. Some of these studies (Taylor et al, 1999; Farrington et al, 2001; Madsen et al, 2003, Jick & Kaye, 2003) have specifically looked at rates of autism in populations who have had MMR and populations who have not had MMR. These studies did not find an increased reported rate of autism in MMR immunised children when compared with children who had not had MMR. Moreover, the recent study by Farrington et al, 2001 showed no temporal association between MMR and onset of autism at any time following MMR.

References:

Jick H. & Kaye JA. Special Article: Epidemiology and Possible Causes of Autism. Pharmacotherapy 2003; 23:1524–1530.

Taylor B, Miller , et al. Autism and measles, mumps and rubella: no epidemiotogical evidence for a causal association. The Lancet 1999; 353:2026–9.

Farrington CP, Miller E, Taylor B. MMR and autism: further evidence against a causal association. Vaccine 2001; 9:3632–65.

Madsen KM, Hivid A, et al. A population-based study of measles, mumps and rubella vaccination and autism. New England Journal of Medicine. 2002; 347:1477–1482.

Caesarean Births

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of births were by caesarean section in the latest period for which figures are available; and what the percentage was *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 15 years ago. [148776]

Dr. Ladyman: The percentage of deliveries by caesarean section in the latest period for which figures are available and percentages for five, 10 and 15 years ago may be found in Table 3 of NHS Maternity Statistics, England: 2001–02 which can be found at www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0309.htm. A copy of the bulletin is also available in the Library.

Care Fees

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to monitor the fee levels offered by local authorities to finance care. [148013]

Dr. Ladyman: Central Government do not themselves routinely monitor the fee levels offered by councils. It is for local councils to develop an understanding of their local market and set fees accordingly. An annual analysis of fee levels is conducted by Laing and Buisson, independent consultants working in the care sector.

Chest Pain Clinics

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average waiting times for patients to be seen for the first diagnosis at chest pain clinics after referral by a general practitioner were in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [147268]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Roll out of rapid access chest pain clinics started in 2000 and national coverage was achieved in 2003. Monitoring of performance began in March 2001, when 75 per cent. of patients were seen within 14 days of referral. The most recent data, for August 2003, showed 86 per cent. of patients seen within 14 days.

Terminal Illnesses (Children)

Ann Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to ensure that there are sufficient *(a)* palliative care and *(b)* hospice beds available for children with life-shortening illnesses. [146319]

Dr. Ladyman: Funding for these services is available from primary care trusts, which are responsible for ensuring the level of health care provision required by their local population. Local authorities also fund services for disabled children. In addition, the New Opportunities Fund has provided £48 million over three years to over 130 projects in support of children with life-shortening illness and their families, and to develop more options for care. The national service framework for children, which is to be published later this year, will also address services for children with severe disability and illness.

Correspondence

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will respond to the correspondence to his Department containing the Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Trust's Legacy Project study. [144455]

Dr. Ladyman: A reply was sent to Mr. Colin Parry on 14 January 2004.

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the NHS Pensions Agency will reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Wrexham of 7 October 2003 relating to Mrs. Margaret Bryden (ref SD 40/080674/9387). [147088]

Mr. Hutton: I understand that the NHS Pensions Agency replied to the hon. Member's letter on 9 January.

Dentistry

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the average starting salary of a dentist leaving training and going into *(a)* an NHS practice and *(b)* private practice was in 2003; [147595]

(2) what proportion of dentists, after training, went into *(a)* an NHS practice and *(b)* private practice in 2003. [147599]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Newly qualified dentists who wish to work in the national health service general dental services are first required to undergo one year's vocational training. The Department does not collect information on the proportion of dentists who go into NHS or private practice after training. There are relatively few dentists who do all of their dental work privately. The Office of Fair Trading's report, "The Private Dentistry Market in the U.K." stated that about 210 dental practises are totally private, out of 11,000 dental practises. Currently the starting salary for a vocational trainee dentist is £25,776 per annum.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists left training in England in each of the last five years. [147598]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The available information, for the numbers of undergraduates in the United Kingdom admitted to dental schools and of those obtaining their first qualification, for the period 1997–98 to 2001–02, is shown in the table.

UK dental schools— intake and number obtaining first qualification

Academic year	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*
Intake	898	868	883	920	922
Number obtaining first qualification	768	782	808	815	800

Source:
Higher Education funding Council for England, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Departmental Staff Absence

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many days have been lost to sickness absence, expressed as days per year per full-time employee, in the Department of Health in each of the last three years. [147031]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The information is shown in the table.

1 January to 31 December	*Total number of days lost to sickness absence*
2000	7,041
2001	6,939
2002	7,856

Source:
Analysis of Sickness Absence in the Civil Service (Year 2000 chart 4.1, Year 2001, chart 9 and Year 2002, chart 9).

Domiciliary Care

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many *(a)* people and *(b)* households received domiciliary care in each year since 1997; [147309]

(2) what proportion of elderly households received *(a)* home care and *(b)* home help services in each year since 1993; and if he will make a statement. [147315]

Dr. Ladyman: Information on the number and percentage of households in England receiving home help or home care from 1993 to 2002 is shown in the table.

Number and percentage of households receiving home help or home care from 1993–2002

England Survey week in September	*Rounded numbers and percentages*		
	65 and over[2] Including double counting[3]	*Total all ages Including double counting[3]*	*Excluding double counting[3]*
Number of households			
1993	463,200	514,600	[1]—
1994	453.100	538,900	[1]—
1995	451,300	513,600	[1]—
1996	427,000	491,100	[1]—
1997	410,400	479,100	[1]—
1998	368,500	447,200	[1]—
1999	[1]—	421,000	[1]—
2000	[1]—	415,800	398,100
2001	[1]—	399,900	381,700
2002	[1]—	384,000	366,800
Percentage[4] of households (percentage)			
1993	9.1	2.7	[1]—
1994	8.9	2.9	[1]—
1995	8.9	2.7	[1]—
1996	8.4	2.6	[1]—

Number and percentage of households receiving home help or home care from 1993–2002

England Survey week in September	*Rounded numbers and percentages*		
	65 and over[2] Including double counting[3]	*Total all ages Including double counting[3]*	*Excluding double counting[3]*
1997	8.1	2.6	[1]—
1998	7.2	2.4	[1]—
1999	[1]—	2.2	[1]—
2000	[1]—	2.2	2.1
2001	[1]—	2.0	1.9
2002	[1]—	1.9	1.8

[1] Data not available
[2] Based on the age of the oldest client in the household.
[3] Double counting occurs when a household receives home care directly from the council and through an independent provider.
[4] For 1993 to 2000, the total number of households is based on the 1991 census; the 2001 census is the basis for 2001 and 2002.
Source:
HH1, Census 1991–2001

The number of contact hours has grown 67 per cent. between 1993 and 2002 at the same time as the number of households receiving home help or home care has fallen. This reflects a trend towards greater intensity and specialist skills in the services provided by home care. At the same time, broader community based services, which help older people and other adults to live independently in their own homes were provided for 1.4 million people in 2002–03; compared with 1.33 million people in 2000–01. Community based services include day care, meals, respite care, direct payments, professional support, transport and equipment, as well as home care.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications made by domiciliary care providers for registration with the National Care Standards Commission have been *(a)* rejected and *(b)* provided with action plans. [147311]

Dr. Ladyman: As at the end of November 2003, the latest date for which information is available, no applications made by domiciliary care providers had been rejected and two applications had been registered with conditions.

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many domiciliary care providers applied for registration with the National Care Standards Commission in each month since March 2003, broken down by region. [147312]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is shown in the table.

Region	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*Total*
East Midlands	61	98	15	8	4	3	6	16	23	234
Eastern	124	99	13	5	4	10	10	9	10	284
London	176	206	28	26	21	16	140	9	24	516
North east	115	27	13	8	8	8	7	5	5	196
North west	123	263	38	29	46	7	12	13	16	547
South east	237	134	21	12	47	23	10	6	10	500
South west	104	213	13	10	13	8	17	7	10	395
West Midlands	134	198	17	12	12	23	8	9	3	416
Yorkshire and Humberside	130	64	11	12	8	12	9	8	6	260
Total	1,204	1,302	169	122	163	110	89	82	107	3,348

Environmental Radiation Report

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment; and if he will make a statement. [148576]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) is currently preparing several reports on different topics. COMARE has already published seven reports. Its eighth report is expected to be published in early March of this year.

Gatwick Airport

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many asylum seekers have arrived at Gatwick airport in each of the last three years claiming to be minors and without identity documents. [144998]

Beverley Hughes: I have been asked to reply.

Data on the number of asylum seekers without documentation claiming to be minors that arrive at specific ports of entry are not recorded and collated centrally. This information could therefore be obtained only from individual case files at disproportionate cost.

Information on asylum statistics is published quarterly on the Home Office website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

GP Referrals

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of cases seen in NHS walk-in centres resulted in referral to the general practitioner with whom the patient is registered in the last year for which figures are available. [147512]

Mr. Hutton: These data are not routinely collected or held centrally. The evaluation of national health service walk-in centres published by the University of Bristol in July 2002, and available at www.epi.bris.ac.uk/wic, suggested that some 13 per cent., of consultations resulted in a referral to a general practitioner. In part to address this, a growing number of NHS walk-in centres now offer access to a general practitioner, as well as the established service offered by nurses.

Infectious Diseases

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* consultants and *(b)* trainees in infectious diseases there were in the NHS in England in each year since 1990. [147498]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Hospital, Public Health Medicine and Community Health Services (HCHS): Consultants and doctors in training with a specialty in infectious diseases; September 1990-June 2003

England[1] *Number (headcount)*

	Consultant	Registrar Group	Senior House Officer	House Officer
2003 (June)	107	[2]	[2]	[2]
2002	95	42	58	21
2001	88	58	61	6
2000	88	53	44	8
1999	69	45	43	6
1998	73	35	41	9
1997	73	37	61	8
1996	65	32	40	10
1995	69	35	38	6
1994	55	31	31	7
1993	48	29	36	3
1992	39	21	40	2
1991	31	28	35	2
1990	38	20	28	1

[1] All data as at 30 September except for 2003, where data as at 30 June.
[2] Data not available.
Note:
Trainees are referred to as doctors in training.
Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census

Consultant numbers have increased by 182 per cent. between September 1990 and June 2003.

Information Campaigns and Advertising

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising was for his Department in each year since 1997. [145371]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The table shows the expenditure on major information campaigns and advertising commissioned by the Department's communications directorate for the financial years 1996–97 to 2002–03. The figures include the costs of publishing, television, radio, poster, newspaper and magazine advertising, and campaigns on subjects such as sexual health, immunisation, staff recruitment, TB awareness, mental health and blood donation.

£ million

Financial year	*Total campaign expenditure*	*Advertising expenditure*
1996–97	15.13	2.50
1997–98	6.63	2.04
1998–99	22.96	8.53
1999–2000	35.97	15.17
2000–01	25.32	20.80
2001–02[1]	37.23	20.41
2002–03[1]	34.85	23.13

[1] These figures include Health Promotion England publicity and advertising when it became part of the Department.

Key Worker Housing

Ms Oona King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with the Deputy Prime Minister on key worker housing and the land required to provide health services for key workers. [146413]

Mr. Hutton: Discussions are currently taking place with officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the requirements of the national health service in respect of affordable housing and the NHS contribution to the provision of key worker accommodation. The Department of Health and NHS Estates have a major programme in place to support key workers. The NHS Plan target of 2,000 extra rental units has been exceeded. By March 2004, around 5,000 NHS staff will have had the opportunity to gain a foothold on the property ladder by way of assistance under the Government's Starter Home Initiative Scheme.

Long-term Care

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has reviewed his policy in the light of the Health Service Ombudsman's report on long-term care. [147962]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department is satisfied with the existing policy on national health service fully funded continuing care, but wants to ensure that policy is correctly implemented. As a result, all strategic health authorities (SHAs) have reviewed their eligibility criteria and an independent survey has been commissioned to examine SHAs' progress on all aspects of continuing care provision. Forthcoming Directions will introduce a legal framework for assessment for NHS fully funded continuing care.

Management Consultants

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost to his Department of using management consultants has been in each of the last five years. [148020]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The cost to the Department of using management consultants in each of the last five years is shown in the following table:

	Cost (£ million)
1998–99	7.3
1990–2000	8.1
2000–01	6.5
2001–02	6.8
2002–03	7.2

Maternity Services

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of mothers have access to a midwifery-led maternity unit. [148933]

Dr. Ladyman: This information is not collected centrally.

Memory Clinics

Mrs. Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average waiting time for a first appointment at a memory clinic from the time of recommendation by a consultant was in *(a)* England and *(b)* Dorset in each of the last two years for which figures are available. [148461]

Dr. Ladyman: This information is not collected centrally.

Mental Incapacity Bill

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether a patient's wishes in the form of an advance directive will be included on the health space of an electronic patient record following legislation in the Mental Incapacity Bill. [144594]

Mr. Hutton: The national health service care records service (CRS) includes functionality for recording patient preferences, such as advanced directives. The specification included the requirement to ensure that the existence of patient preferences (including advance directives, for example, a "living will" or a religious requirement that blood transfusions are not to be given) shall be recorded and displayed, and the contractor shall ensure that clinicians are:

alerted to the existence of a patient preference;

advised to ask the patient to confirm its validity; and

advised to record the patient's confirmation of its validity.

Patient preferences can therefore be captured at the point of care on the relevant system. The patient will be prompted at the point of care to confirm that the advanced directive is still to be enforced—this is to avoid an out-dated statement of patient preferences being enforced (for example, if a patient changes his or her mind).

The existence of the NHS CRS in no way prejudices a patient's rights under existing or proposed legislation.

Microbiology

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many consultant microbiologist vacancies there were in the NHS in England on the last date for which figures are available, broken down by region; [147495]

(2) how many new posts in medical microbiology have been created in the NHS in the past 10 years, broken down by region; [147496]

(3) how many medical microbiology training posts there were in the NHS in England in each year since 1990. [147497]

Mr. Hutton: Vacancy data is collected by the Department of Health as three-month vacancies as at 31 March each year. These are vacancies which trusts are actively trying to fill, which have lasted for three months or more.

Information showing the number of three-month microbiology and virology consultant vacancies as at 31 March 2003 in England, by strategic health authority has been placed in the Library.

The Department does not collect data on the number of new posts in microbiology and virology. Workforce data are collected through the annual Department of Health medical workforce census. The census is a snapshot of data as at 30 September in the appropriate year. The information in the table shows the net increase in the number of staff in microbiology and virology since 1992.

Due to the variation in regional boundaries over the stated time period, between 1992 and 1997, a breakdown by national health service regional office has also been placed in the Library. Between 1998 and 2002, data is shown by government office regions.

Between 1997 and 2002, staff increased by 22 per cent.

The table shows the number of medical microbiology and virology training posts in England since 1990.

Hospital, Public Health Medicine and Community Health Services (HCHS): Doctors in training with a specialty in medical microbiology and virology; 1990–2002—England, as at 30 September

Number (headcount)

	All training grades of which:	*Registrar*	*Senior House Officer*	*House Officer*
2002	179	162	17	—
2001	156	143	13	—
2000	141	121	20	—
1999	142	131	11	—
1998	136	125	11	—
1997	139	125	14	—
1996	134	124	10	—
1995	159	145	14	—
1994	189	176	13	—
1993	182	163	18	1
1992	173	159	14	—
1991	191	175	16	—
1990	163	146	17	—

Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census

NHS Estates

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what revaluations of the sites involved in the NHS Estates surplus property disposals have been carried out in the last six months; and when. [147754]

Mr. Hutton: A due diligence exercise, using its own independent valuers, has been undertaken by the preferred partner.

NHS Trusts (Mergers)

Mr. Norman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS *(a)* hospital trusts, *(b)* primary care trusts, *(c)* mental health trusts and *(d)* ambulance trusts have merged in each of the last six years. [145355]

Mr. Hutton: The number of trusts involved in mergers with similar trusts to form the same type of trust is shown in the table. The distinction between 'hospital trusts' and 'mental health trusts' is not straightforward owing to a number of trusts providing a range of services.

	Ambulance NHS trusts	*Other NHS trusts*	*Primary care trusts*
1997–98	0	8	n/a
1998–99	0	39	n/a
1999–2000	8	40	n/a
2000–01	0	22	n/a
2001–02	0	40	0
2002–03	0	36	2

North Staffordshire Hospital NHS Trust

Phil Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken following the Griffiths report into the research framework at North Staffordshire hospital NHS Trust. [147507]

Dr. Ladyman: The Department takes very seriously the points made in the report about the importance of public safety, and of protecting children. The Department of Health, Home Office, Department for Education and Skills and the Welsh Assembly Government published "Safeguarding Children in Whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced" in August 2002. Paragraphs 6.46–6.51 provide guidance on the use of covert video surveillance and references the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act of 2000.

This document was in response to the recommendation made within the Griffiths report to develop guidelines to assist the identification of children who have had illnesses feigned or induced by a carer within the framework of "Working Together to Safeguard Children (1999)", the Government's inter-agency guidance on child protection. It was the subject of public consultation prior to being published in 2002.

We have also taken a number of steps to strengthen research and clinical governance systems, not necessarily as a direct result of the findings of the Griffiths report. For example:

We have established the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) to focus our efforts to improve patient safety in the national health service and to run a new national reporting and learning system for patient safety incidents. The reporting system will be implemented across the NHS during 2004.

NHS staff will be able to report adverse incidents and "near misses" affecting NHS patient care to the NPSA, so that patterns and trends can be identified and lessons learnt in one part of the NHS can be properly shared with the whole of the health service.

The NHS Plan set out a review of consent procedures to ensure that good practice in seeking consent for both treatment and research is in place throughout the NHS. In November 2001, "The Good Practice in Consent Implementation Guide: Consent to Examination or Treatment", was published, containing a model consent policy and consent forms.

In the summer of 2000, the Department set up the Central Office for Research Ethics Committees to improve the support provided for multi centre research ethics and local research ethics committees.

The Department published the Research Governance Framework in March 2001, aimed at continuous improvements and the reduction of unacceptable variations in research practice across health and social care. The Department has been monitoring NHS trusts' compliance with the framework since its publication.

In its 2002–03 annual research and development report, North Staffordshire hospitals reported satisfactorily on compliance with the research governance framework targets for March 2003 and that it was either already compliant or on target with the research governance

framework targets for March 2004. Actual compliance with the March 2004 targets will be assessed in the 2003–04 annual research and development report.

The Department has commissioned a substantial audit of the use of continuous negative extrathoracic pressure at the University hospital of North Staffordshire NHS Trust (formerly North Staffordshire hospital NHS Trust). This is still on-going. The results will be published when the audit is completed.

Nurses

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* district nurses, *(b)* community nurses and *(c)* midwives there were in (i) St. Helens, (ii) Merseyside, (iii) the North West and (iv) England in each year since 1992. [147171]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is shown in the table.

NHS hospital and community health services: Qualified community nursing by each specified group in England, the North West regional office area, Cheshire and Merseyside and the St. Helens and Knowsley Health Authority area as at 30 September each specified year

Headcount

	England	*North West*[1]	*Cheshire and Merseyside*[2]	*St. Helens and Knowsley HA*[3]
1992				
Community nursing	32,797	[4]—	[4]—	229
District nurses	11,013	[4]—	[4]—	54
Midwives	29,553	[4]—	[4]—	163
1993				
Community nursing	33,384	[4]—	[4]—	234
District nurses	10,888	[4]—	[4]—	52
Midwives	29,439	[4]—	[4]—	151
1994				
Community nursing	33,866	[4]—	[4]—	216
District nurses	10,015	[4]—	[4]—	50
Midwives	28,638	[4]—	[4]—	144
1995				
Community nursing	40,566	[4]—	[4]—	339
District nurses	13,793	[4]—	[4]—	78
Midwives	22,022	[4]—	[4]—	120
1996				
Community nursing	43,137	6,116	2,126	331
District nurses	14,248	2,248	752	78
Midwives	22,595	3,782	1,221	113
1997				
Community nursing	44,710	6,227	2,212	350
District nurses	14,150	2,263	740	63
Midwives	22,385	3,703	1,173	102
1998				
Community nursing	46,953	6,608	2,308	356
District nurses	14,260	2,254	764	57
Midwives	22,841	3,613	1,161	91
Community nursing	48,828	7,043	2,270	328
1999				
Community nursing	48,828	7,043	2,270	328
District nurses	14,258	2,175	701	51
Midwives	22,799	3,633	1,289	118
2000				
Community nursing	50,877	7,308	2,483	337
District nurses	14,452	2,150	696	51
Midwives	22,572	3,553	1,309	119
2001				
Community nursing	55,275	8,180	2,878	380

NHS hospital and community health services: Qualified community nursing by each specified group in England, the North West regional office area, Cheshire and Merseyside and the St. Helens and Knowsley Health Authority area as at 30 September each specified year

Headcount

	England	*North West*[1]	*Cheshire and Merseyside*[2]	*St. Helens and Knowsley HA*[3]
District nurses	13,510	1,963	673	49
Midwives	23,075	3,674	1,265	121
2002				
Community nursing	57,975	9,161	3,181	350
District nurses	12,184	2,126	727	62
Midwives	23,249	3,833	1,276	118

[1] 1995–2001 data are based on Government Office Region areas, 2002 data is based on staffing figures for Q13 Greater Manchester SHA, Q14 Cumbria and Lancashire SHA, Q15 Cheshire and Merseyside SHA

[2] 1995–2001 figures are based on QDC Wirral HA:, QC7 Sefton HA, QC2 Liverpool HA , QC5 St. Helens and Knowsley HA, QCW South Cheshire, HA and QCV North Cheshire HA and for 2002 Cheshire and Merseyside SHA.

[3] Figures for St. Helens and Knowsley HA for 2002 are based on RBN St. Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust, 5J3 St. Helens PCT and 5J4 Knowsley PCT.

[4] Accurate comparable information is not available.

Notes:

1. A new classification of the non-medical workforce was introduced in 1995. Information based on this classification is not directly comparable with earlier years.
2. Community nursing includes nurses employed in community learning disabilities, community psychiatry and community services excluding district nurses.

Source:

Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census

Procurement Outsourcing

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147584]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department's procurement policy is based on value for money, having due regard to propriety and regularity and the requirements of the European Union Treaty, including the principle of non-discrimination, the European Community procurement directives and the United Kingdom's international obligations.

The Department has not outsourced any information technology or call centre services to offshore companies and there are no current plans to do so.

Smoking

Geraldine Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ban smoking in public places. [148551]

Miss Melanie Johnson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Keith Vaz) on Monday 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 209W.

Sperm Counts

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on recent research from the Aberdeen Fertility Centre on sperm counts since 1989; what assessment he has made of links between harmful man-made chemicals in the environment and reduced sperm counts; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals. [147231]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The research from the Aberdeen Fertility Centre has not been peer-reviewed or published, and has not been assessed by the Department. The Global assessment of the state-of-the-science of endocrine disrupters, by the World Health Organization (WHO) International Programme on Chemical Safety concluded in August 2002 that,

"although an extensive review of the published data suggest that there could be temporal and geographical variation in human sperm production, it is not possible to conclude that the phenomenon is real and, if so, to what extent reductions in sperm count may affect fertility. The data should be interpreted with caution."

The WHO assessment also concluded that,

"Analysis of the human data by itself, while generating concerns, has so far failed to provide firm evidence of direct causal associations between low-level (i.e., levels measured in the general population) exposure to chemicals and adverse health outcomes".

The Government research programme on trends in male reproductive health and the possible influences of occupational or environmental (or other) exposure to chemicals includes two studies on sperm counts. One is a study of Scottish male reproductive health (Medical Research Council Reproductive Biology Unit, Edinburgh). The other (which is co-funded with the European Chemical Industries Council) is a United Kingdom multi-centre study of occupational and environmental exposure to chemicals and male fertility (Universities of Manchester and Sheffield). The results will be published in due course.

The Government's chemical strategy was published in December 1999 and is available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/chemicals/ukstrategy.htm. Its main goals are to: phase out chemicals posing an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment as soon as possible; reduce as far as possible the risks posed by chemicals that are essential in our everyday lives, thus finding a balance between protecting health and the environment and retaining the socio-economic benefits that many chemicals provide; and make full information publicly available about the environmental and health risks of chemicals.

Waiting Times

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms are in place to monitor progress made by *(a)* strategic health authorities and *(b)* primary care trusts in reducing waiting times for diagnostic testing. [147270]

Mr. Hutton: Waits for diagnostic services are not recorded nationally.

The Government is committed to improving access to diagnostic services and the Department is working in partnership with strategic health authorities (SHAs) and other stakeholders to secure a more responsive service. Each SHA is responsible for developing and implementing local improvement programmes for diagnostic services and to monitor progress against any locally agreed objectives.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by the Changing Workforce Programme in redesigning the roles of diagnostic staff to reduce waiting times. [147271]

Mr. Hutton: The Changing Workforce Programme is supporting the development of a number of roles designed to help the National Health Service provide speedier access to high quality services.

In particular, the roles of assistant practitioner and advanced practitioner will help reduce waiting times for radiography services. An accelerated development programme is supporting the implementation of these roles across a network of hospital trusts. To date, 81 assistant practitioners in radiography are in training or scheduled to receive training in 2004, while 79 trainees are working towards advanced practitioner status.

It is anticipated that the majority of plain film imaging will be performed by assistant practitioners under the supervision of qualified radiographers. This will release radiographers' time and allow them to focus on more complex issues, thus increasing service capacity. Once the assistant practitioners are fully trained, further data will be collected to evaluate the impact on waiting times and access to services.

The appointment of advanced practitioners in diagnostic areas such as computer tomography imaging, trauma imaging and gastro-intestinal imaging, has already contributed to a reduction in waiting times. For example, at one site, the waiting time for a barium enema has been reduced from 30 weeks to one week since advanced practitioners have been performing this procedure.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average wait was for patients to be seen by their own general practitioner in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion were seen within 48 hours. [147511]

Mr. Hutton: Data are collected on availability of access to primary medical services rather than actual waiting times. Information for November 2003 shows that 94 per cent. of the population was able to be offered an appointment to see a general practitioner within two working days.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefit Fraud

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the programme protection strategy used by the Pension Service to prevent pension credit fraud since October 2003. [147828]

Malcolm Wicks: The programme protection strategy used to prevent loss in minimum income guarantee was reviewed to ensure its continued effectiveness once pension credit was introduced in October 2003.

The review concluded that the strategy would continue to address those areas where fraud could occur in pension credit.

The strategy and introduction of pension credit presents opportunities for improved protection at the gateway during the teleapplication process and for making use of all our contacts with customers to help them get their applications correct from the outset. The use of intelligent questioning, targeted visits and contacts with customers based on established risk, and effective internal and external data matching, all support the prevention of pension credit fraud.

Positive efforts made in driving down the loss and the legislative changes introduced for pension credit have contributed towards the achievement of the Service Delivery Agreement target to reduce fraud and error overpayments to pensioners by 20 per cent. by March 2006.

Measurement of fraud and error in pension credit commenced in October 2003 and we expect to publish results for the first full year's data in July 2005. In the interim we will be undertaking an early examination of cases found to be incorrect so that we can refine the programme protection strategy as necessary.

Casual Appointments

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many employees have been employed on 13-week casual appointments in his Department in each year since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [147816]

Maria Eagle: The Department generally only employs people on casual appointments in order to fulfil a short term need. The information required is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Children Leaving Care

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of children who had been in local authority care were unemployed in the September after leaving school in each of the last five years. [147332]

Mr. Browne: The information requested is not available.

Council Tax

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the cost of the new council tax benefit in the first full year of operation; and how it compares to the cost of the old council tax benefit, using the same methodology for the calculations. [146689]

Malcolm Wicks: Council tax benefit expenditure for 2003–04 is forecast to be £3.4 billion, and for 2004–05 to be £3.8 billion. However, on 15 December 2003, we announced reforms of council tax benefit, which included the abolition of restrictions for people living in band F, G and H properties. This is anticipated to take place from April 2004, with an expected additional cost of £6.5 million per annum benefiting 21,000 claimants.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* north Staffordshire. [146914]

Maria Eagle: The number of staff working in the West Midlands and north Staffordshire is shown in the following table.

	DWP Staff
West Midlands	11,844
North Staffordshire	726

Notes:
1. Figures show headcount and are consistent with Cabinet Office definitions other than for the inclusion of staff on paid maternity leave.
2. Figures include temporary staff.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147296]

Mr. Pond: I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Financial Secretary gave him on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 516–17W.

Former Soviet Citizens

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether former Soviet citizens resident in this country qualify for the UK state pension; and if he will make a statement. [148718]

Malcolm Wicks: The UK State Pension is payable generally to people who have paid or who are deemed to have paid sufficient National Insurance contributions while working and residing in this country.

Therefore, former Soviet citizens can only start to acquire entitlement to a UK State Pension from the time they become resident in the UK.

Income Support Claimants

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if his Department will provide individuals claiming income support which is paid into their bank account with documentary proof of their receipt of benefit so that they can apply for discounts and reduced rates for leisure and other services. [148866]

Mr. Pond: People receiving benefit that is paid into a bank account can use their initial award notifications as documentary proof of entitlement. Alternatively, customers can obtain evidence confirming their entitlement from the Department; for example, Jobcentre Plus provide customers with locally produced forms.

Local Housing Allowance

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the local housing allowance will be extended from the nine Pathfinder authorities to all local authorities. [R] [146690]

Malcolm Wicks: There will be a comprehensive evaluation of local housing allowance Pathfinders including interviews with claimants, landlords, local authority staff and stakeholder organisations, as well as an analysis of administrative data. This is already underway.

The findings of the evaluation will inform decisions on the national extension of the allowance. It is envisaged that local housing allowance will be extended to all local authorities in 2006.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for what reasons the local housing allowance applies only to the de-regulated private sector. [R] [146691]

Malcolm Wicks: We hope to implement a flat rate housing benefit system in the social sector, similar to that anticipated in the private rented sector to enable people in that sector to benefit from the choice and flexibility that the reforms can provide. We aim to extend our reforms to the social rented sector as soon as rent restructuring and increased choice have created an improved market.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how the rent of those tenants whose rent is higher than the local housing allowance will be paid; [R] [146692]

(2) whether there will be a hardship payment to prevent the eviction of those tenants whose rent is higher than the new local housing allowance. [R] [146693]

Malcolm Wicks: Tenants whose rent is higher than their local housing allowance will be expected to make good the difference with their landlord. This is no different to what happens under existing rules. During the Pathfinder stage, no claimant will be worse off financially at the point of change as they will be covered by a form of transitional protection.

There will not be a hardship payment to tenants whose rent is higher than their local housing allowance. Tenants will have the choice to shop around and look for a cheaper property in such circumstances.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when the nine Pathfinder local authorities for local housing allowance will fully implement the new system. [R] [146694]

Malcolm Wicks: The nine Pathfinder authorities will implement the new housing allowance using one of two different approaches—a "big bang", or a "phased". Under both approaches, all new claims made after the start date will go directly on to local housing allowance.

Under the "big bang" approach, all existing claims will be converted to housing allowance on the authority's start date. However, the local authority can delay the change on payments to tenants for up to six months.

Under the "phased" approach, exiting cases will be converted gradually over a 12 month period. Conversion will be triggered either by a change in the tenant's circumstances, or when a referral to the rent officer would have become due under the housing benefit system.

The table shows the start date for each of the pilot authorities together with the approach they have chosen to adopt.

Local Authority	*Start date*	*Approach*
Blackpool	17 November 2003	Phased
Lewisham	1 December 2003	Phased
Coventry	12 January 2004	Phased
Teignbridge	12 January 2004	Phased
Brighton	2 February 2004	Big Bang
Edinburgh	9 February 2004	Big Bang
NE Lincolnshire	9 February 2004	Big Bang
Conwy	9 February 2004	Phased
Leeds	9 February 2004	Phased

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will make a statement on the criteria used to set the local housing allowance in each area; [R] [146695]

(2) how often local housing allowance will be reviewed; and what methodology will be used to calculate the new level. [R] [146696]

Malcolm Wicks: Rent Officers in each Pathfinder area will look at a range of properties and rents in that area. Excluding exceptionally high and exceptionally low rents to avoid distortion, Rent Officers will identify the lowest and highest rents for a property type, add them together and divide by two. This will give the local housing allowance for that property type in that area.

Rent Officers will review the local housing allowance levels on a monthly basis to ensure they remain accurate reflections of average rents in an area. However, an individual claimant's entitlement will only be reviewed annually or where there is a change of circumstances.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the estimated cost is of local housing allowance in the first full year of operation; and what the equivalent cost of housing benefit would have been using the same methodology for the calculation. [R] [146697]

Malcolm Wicks: It is estimated that the Local Housing Allowance Pathfinders will cost an additional £20 million in their first year of full operation. Information on the forecasted equivalent cost of housing benefit is not available.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the effect of local housing allowance on rent restructuring in the de-regulated private rental sector. [R] [146698]

Malcolm Wicks: The programme of rent restructuring applies only to the social housing sector and not to the de-regulated private sector.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how local housing allowance will be adjusted to take into account improvements that are carried out to an individual property. [R] [146699]

Malcolm Wicks: Local housing allowance will not depend on the individual rent or the type of property occupied by a claimant. It will be based on a standard amount for similarly suitable properties in that area for the size of the claimant's household.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether the landlord will be able to apply to have local housing allowance paid directly to him in circumstances when the tenant is likely to abscond with the allowance. [R] [146700]

Malcolm Wicks: Landlords can make representations to receive direct payment if they believe that a tenant will not use their housing allowance to pay their rent. Landlords have the right of appeal if the authority decides to continue to make payment directly to tenants. Each of the Pathfinder authorities has held meetings with local landlords to explain how the housing allowance will work.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of *(a)* the change in the number of homes available to rent to those in receipt of local housing allowance and *(b)* the change in the number of empty homes as a result of the introduction of local housing allowance. [R] [146701]

Malcolm Wicks: We do not expect there to be any significant change in the number of homes made available to rent to those in receipt of local housing allowance, or an increase or decrease in the number of empty homes as a result of the introduction of the local housing allowance. However, both will be monitored as part of the comprehensive evaluation of the Pathfinders.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what arrangements are being made in each of the Pathfinder local authority areas to house tenants who have to move from the private to the public sector because of the introduction of local housing allowance. [R] [146702]

Malcolm Wicks: The local housing allowance was launched in Blackpool on 17 November and Lewisham on 1 December 2003. Coventry and Teignbridge both introduced the housing allowance on 12 January this year. The remaining five authorities will be going live during February this year. So far there has been no evidence of tenants having to move from the private to public sector. However, we will monitor this as part of the comprehensive evaluation of local housing allowance Pathfinders, which will include interviews with claimants, landlords, local authority staff and stakeholder organisations, as well as an analysis of administrative data; the evaluation is already under way.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what advice the Department is offering those tenants who get into financial difficulties following the introduction of local housing allowance; and what the estimated cost is of the provision of that advice. [R] [146703]

Malcolm Wicks: Pathfinder authorities are being given an additional £540,000 towards the cost of providing financial management advice to claimants. Pathfinders are working directly or in co-operation with voluntary agencies, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to provide advice on financial management. This is in addition to existing support mechanisms offered by welfare organisations, and loans and advice available from Jobcentre Plus.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how local housing allowance will be paid; and what arrangements will be made for those tenants who do not have a bank account; [146704]

(2) whether the tenant will be reimbursed for any overdraft fee paid as a result of late payment of local housing allowance into a bank account. [146705]

Malcolm Wicks: As for tenants who currently receive direct payment of housing benefit, payments of the local housing allowance will be made by cheque or a bank transfer. Pathfinder authorities will assist tenants with advice on how to obtain bank accounts.

It is entirely a matter for local authorities to decide whether to reimburse for any overdraft fee incurred as a result of late payment of local housing allowance into a bank account. Local authorities will be able to process local housing allowance claims more quickly than current housing benefit claims, and our aim will be to prevent late payments.

New Deal

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his latest estimate is of the number of young people in *(a)* West Cumbria and *(b)* Copeland who have benefited from the New Deal; and if he will make a statement. [148010]

Mr. Browne: The New Deal for Young People has been successful in helping over 460,000 young people into work, including 1,160 people in the Copeland constituency. Figures for West Cumbria are not available; however, 4,910 young people in the Jobcentre Plus Cumbria district have been helped into work by New Deal for Young People.

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have entered the employer option under the New Deal for Young People in each year since 1997, broken down by ethnicity; how many people have entered the full-time education and training option under the New Deal for Young People in each year since 1997, broken down by ethnicity; and if he will make a statement. [147815]

Mr. Browne: The information is in the tables.

New Deal for Young People: Starts to employment option, broken down by ethnicity

	1998	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*[1]
White	12,580	16,650	13,950	10,650	10,130	5,190
Black-Caribbean	220	330	250	160	180	70
Black-African	90	110	100	80	80	50
Black-Other	100	140	100	90	60	30
Indian	130	230	170	150	120	60
Pakistani	260	390	300	240	210	100
Bangladeshi	80	120	90	100	80	30
Chinese	10	20	20	10	10	10
Other	170	230	200	170	180	120
Prefer not to say	330	630	520	360	290	190
Missing[2]	570	300	70	20	10	0

New Deal for Young People: Starts to full-time education and training option broken down by ethnicity

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003[1]
White	24,300	32,480	24,600	14,320	16,800	14,600
Black-Caribbean	840	1,440	1,000	750	880	740
Black-African	690	1,070	680	710	1,040	930
Black-Other	420	610	430	330	360	290
Indian	410	590	360	250	300	220
Pakistani	890	1,200	1,000	800	880	720
Bangladeshi	260	380	230	190	240	210
Chinese	70	90	80	50	60	50
Other	700	1,230	1,110	1,090	1,840	2,190
Prefer not to say	810	1,730	1,250	820	750	730
Missing[2]	90	60	20	10	0	0

[1] To September.

[2] It has only been compulsory to record ethnicity on the Jobcentre Plus Labour Market System (LMS) since the spring of 2002, and some ethnicity codes were not recorded before then.

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many participants on New Deal for Young People in the Chesterfield constituency have been placed on training courses for *(a)* up to one year and *(b)* over one year in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [147819]

Mr. Browne: In the 12 months to September 2003, 70 people started on the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) Full-Time Education and Training Option in Chesterfield.

It is the policy of New Deal for Young People that nobody should be placed on an NDYP Full-Time Education and Training course for longer than a year.

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many participants have joined the New Deal for Young People *(a)* once, *(b)* twice, *(c)* three times and *(d)* more than three times, broken down by ethnicity; and if he will make a statement. [147820]

Mr. Browne: The information is in the following table:

New Deal for Young People: Number of times people have joined the programme broken down by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Once	Twice	Three times	More than three
White	485,660	119,620	28,400	5,000
Black-Caribbean	13,380	5,060	1,470	260
Black-African	12,270	2,980	690	130
Black-Other	6,340	1,990	490	70
Indian	11,970	2,190	450	60
Pakistani	20,670	5,080	1,180	190
Bangladeshi	7,440	1,610	330	50
Chinese	1,420	230	40	10
Other	25,120	4,440	990	170
Prefer not to say	27,730	5,390	1,050	190
Missing	6,590	70	10	0
Total	618,620	148,640	35,080	6,110

Note:
Figures are to the end of September 2003.
Source:
DWP Information and Analysis Directorate.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he will reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North East on 16 December 2003, reference 145191, which was transferred to his Department by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. [148472]

Mr. Pond: I replied to the hon. Member's question on 13 January.

Pension Credit

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of expenditure on the *(a)* guarantee credit and *(b)* savings credit in (i) 2003–04, (ii) 2004–05 and (iii) 2005–06. [145981]

Malcolm Wicks: The information is in the table.

£ million

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
Guarantee credit	4,730	4,710	5,160
Savings credit	350	1,020	1,000
Total	5,080	5,720	6,160

Notes:
1. Figures are based on latest published forecasts, published in the pre-Budget report on 10 December 2003.
2. Figures for 2003–04 include expenditure on the minimum income guarantee, prior to the introduction of pension credit. Minimum income guarantee expenditure is treated as guarantee credit. The 2003–04 guarantee credit figure also includes child elements of the minimum income guarantee totalling £50 million. These payments were replaced by child tax credits at the same time as the introduction of pension credit.
3. Note that until October 2004, new claimants will be able to claim payment for entitlement dating back to October 2003.
4. Figures are rounded to nearest £10 million.
5. Due to rounding, figures may not sum exactly to totals.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many telephone inquiries on pension credit have been received in each of the last 12 months. [147692]

Malcolm Wicks: The table shows numbers of telephone calls received by the pension credit application line in each month since it became operational in April 2003. The application line primarily handles calls from customers about applying for pension credit, but also deals with other inquiry calls.

Calls to pension credit application line—April to December 2003

2003	Calls received
April	20,810
May	32,750
June	60,240
July	118,220
August	181,860
September	427,900
October	482,780
November	318,280
December	193,900
Total	1,836,740

Note:
Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the advertising budget is for the pension credit. [147693]

Malcolm Wicks: The marketing campaign for pension credit has been designed to be flexible and the level of expenditure may change according to need. However, it is currently estimated that media costs, including direct mailing, television and press advertising, will be in the region of £12 to £17 million, excluding VAT, to October 2004.

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in *(a)* Cumbria and *(b)* Copeland are receiving pension credit; what percentage this represents of those entitled to pension credit in each case; and if he will make a statement. [148009]

Malcolm Wicks: At 31 December 2003 there were *(a)* 15,950 pensioner households (18,710 individuals) in Cumbria and *(b)* 2,300 pensioner households (2,739 individuals) in the Copeland constituency receiving pension credit. Information on numbers of households eligible for pension credit is not available at county or constituency level. However, the number of eligible households in the North West region is estimated to be 500,000. At 31 December 2003 there were 289,000 pensioner households (344,000 individuals) in the North West region receiving pension credit.

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how often his Department revises the standard interest rate used to calculate the mortgage element included in the pension credit. [148863]

Malcolm Wicks: The standard interest rate is based on the weighted average of the basic rates charged by the top building societies. A change is triggered whenever the average rate which is published monthly by the Office for National Statistics increases/decreases by 0.25 per cent. or more.

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many whole-time equivalent staff were employed by the pension credit helpline in the most recent month for which figures are available. [148969]

Malcolm Wicks: The Pension Credit application line is resourced in line with forecast levels of activity. At 5 January the application line had approximately 1,300 whole-time equivalent staff handling customer contacts. This is expected to rise to approximately 1,400 whole-time equivalent staff by late March.

Pension Credit Helpline

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many calls were received by the pension credit helpline in the most recent month for which figures are available. [148971]

Malcolm Wicks: The Pension Credit application line received approximately 193,900 calls in December 2003.

Pensions (Order Book Payments)

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what arrangements were made for pensioners with order books whose pension fell due on Christmas Day 2003; and when they were able to receive that payment. [148970]

Mr. Pond: The arrangements agreed with the Post Office for Christmas Day 2003, gave pensioners (women aged 60 and over, men aged 65 and over) the option of encashing the order book payments dated 25 December, up to a week early, (i.e., on or after 18 December). Post Office were open for normal business hours, up to and including 12.30 p.m. on 24 December.

Pensions (Warrington, North)

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Warrington North have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been awarded the pension credit; and what the average increase in income is per pensioner. [148250]

Malcolm Wicks: At 31 December 2003 there were 3,426 pensioner households (4,151 individuals) in the Warrington North constituency receiving pension credit. Information on the number of pension credit applications in individual constituencies is not available. The average weekly rate of pension credit awards in Warrington North is £41.19. Information on the average amount gained by pensioners in individual constituencies, since the introduction of pension credit, will become available following publication of the November 2003 Quarterly Statistical Enquiry on 17 March 2004.

Winter Fuel Payments

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much his Department has spent on advertising the availability of Winter Fuel Payments. [147771]

Malcolm Wicks: In the region of £625,000 was spent on national and regional press and consumer magazine advertising throughout the 2003–04 Winter Fuel Payments campaign.

A wide variety of publicity in other forums was also undertaken to support this advertising.

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what studies his Department undertook to find the most effective way of informing people about their eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments. [147772]

Malcolm Wicks: The Department uses a wide range of research on how to reach older people when formulating its communication strategies.

We develop communications in partnership with representative groups such as Age Concern, National Pensioners Convention and Citizens Advice. We have built on our experiences from past years of paying Winter Fuel Payments using communication channels appropriate to our customers.

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Scotland are *(a)* eligible for the £300 winter fuel payment for the over eighties and *(b)* have received it this winter. [148753]

Malcolm Wicks: Analysis of payments made this winter is not yet available and therefore it is not possible to say how many payments were made to households including someone aged 80 or over. Nor have we data to establish how many households include someone who is aged 80 or over and would be eligible for a winter fuel payment of £300.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Thames Gateway

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on progress since the announcement of the Thames Gateway Communities plan; how much public money has been spent; how much private sector capital has been committed; how much land has been acquired; how much land will be acquired; and over what timescale. [148199]

Yvette Cooper: I am pleased to be able to report substantial progress in the Thames Gateway even since my right hon. Friend the Member for Streatham announcement in July.

Delivery is the key to the Thames Gateway. The new UDC for Thurrock is now established and Chair and Board appointed, consultation on the London UDC will end on 6 February and new partnership bodies for the other growth areas in the Gateway are now in place. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister expects the new Gateway Office to be operational shortly.

The Thames Gateway expenditure programme provides £446 million over the three years commencing 2003—4. Projects worth £330 million have been accepted in principle for funding, and some £50 million worth of projects have been formally approved. These range from land acquisitions in London's Lower Lea valley, to affordable housing schemes with the Housing Corporation, a new lifelong learning centre for Barking, University campus expansions at Southend and Medway, and environmental Green Grid initiatives across South Essex and North Kent. In addition to this, the Regional Development Agencies, English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation and Highways Agency are also undertaking projects which make a major contribution to the Gateway, including Barking Reach, Chatham Maritime, A 13 improvements and anew Swale Crossing.

Outline planning applications have been submitted for the key private sector developments at Stratford City and Ebbsfleet. These schemes alone represent private sector investment approaching £7 billion.

The Strategic Rail Authority confirmed shortly before Christmas that it will be proceeding with plans for domestic services on the Channel Tunnel Rail link as part of the new Integrated Kent Franchise, and more recently, my right hon. Friend Member for Edinburgh Central, has announced that he is offering financial support for the Thames Gateway Bridge, the proposed new river crossing in East London. Both are strategic projects which will strengthen the platform for new development, and will help to consolidate private sector confidence and involvement.

There are no targets for land acquisition in the Gateway; the need for land assembly by the public sector will be determined by market strength and interest. To date, funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister budget for land acquisitions is being pursued for projects in the Lower Lea for new mixed-use development, and in Sheppy, to promote new housing.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many houses have been built under plans for the development of the Thames Gateway communities; how many are social housing; how many houses are planned to be built; and how many will be social housing. [148201]

Yvette Cooper: The Government's policy for the development of sustainable communities in Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas was set out in "Creating Sustainable Communities: Making It Happen" in July 2003. The most recent annual house building figures for local authority areas contained within the Thames Gateway are for the 2002–03 financial year. Local authorities and the national house building council report a total new build of 7,865 houses for this period, of which 1,077 are social housing. It should be noted that these figures are totals for local authorities in Thames Gateway, but that some local authority areas fall only partially within the designated Thames Gateway region.

"Creating Sustainable Communities: Making It Happen" set a target for the Thames Gateway of the development of 120,000 new homes over the period to 2016, which is 40,000 above current planning targets. Projects worth £300 million were approved in July as part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's new Sustainable Communities funding package. These include funding for new affordable housing.

The Government do not set annual targets centrally for local authorities on either affordable or social housing. Planning policies for affordable housing are set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 3, "Housing", and in Circular 6/98, "Planning for Affordable Housing". They advise that where local planning authorities are able to demonstrate a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, based on up-to-date surveys and other data, they should indicate in their local plan how many affordable homes need to be provided throughout the plan area, and set indicative targets for specific suitable sites (expressed either as numbers of homes or a percentage of the homes on the site). Local planning authorities should be monitoring their performance against their local plan policies and targets, but this information is not collected centrally.

Arms Length Management Organisations

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much has been set aside for the funding of newly constituted arms length management organisations for *(a)* 2003–04 and *(b)* 2004–05. [148730]

Yvette Cooper: Allocations for Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) are made in two-year tranches. £300 million has been allocated to eight local authorities setting up ALMOs under Round 1 of the programme for 2002–04, £383 million to 12 local authorities under Round 2 for 2003–05, and £360 million to 13 authorities under Round 3 for 2004–06. Allocations for Round 1 ALMOs for 2004–05 and later have yet to be decided.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will publish the results of the arms length management organisation ballots in those local authorities where votes have taken place this year. [148731]

Yvette Cooper: The results of ballots on Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) proposals held to date by local authorities awarded places on Round 3 of the ALMO programme in 2003, or applying for places on Round 4 in 2004, are tabled as follows. The results of ballots held under Rounds 1 and 2 were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Colchester on 15 September 2003, *Official Report*, column 602W.

		Percentage	
Local authority	*Turnout*	*In favour*	*Not in favour*
ALMO Round 3			
Camden	30	23	77
High Peak	60	98	2
Islington	27	85	15
Sheffield: Brightside and Shiregreen	42	78	22
Sheffield: Central Area	47	87	13
South Lakeland	65	88	12
ALMO Round 4			
Hammersmith and Fulham	40	81	19

Birmingham Urban Development Plan

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether Pedimore, Sutton Coldfield, has been removed as a major investment site for the West Midlands region in accordance with the independent Inspector's report into the Birmingham Urban Development Plan. [148011]

Yvette Cooper: Peddimore is identified as a Major Investment Site in my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister's Proposed Changes to Draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the West Midlands. The Proposed Changes were subject to a public consultation period, which closed on 12 December 2003.

My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister is now considering responses to the Proposed Changes. He is aware of the Inspector's report on the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan, and this will form part of his consideration. I cannot comment further on the Proposed Changes at this stage.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether Bassetts Pole, Sutton Coldfield, has been removed as a major investment site for the West Midlands region in accordance with the Inspector's report into the Birmingham Urban Development Plan. [148012]

Yvette Cooper: My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister's Proposed Changes to Draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the West Midlands were prepared before the UDP Inspector's report was published, and state:

> "the principle of a premium employment site at Bassetts Pole is contained in the adopted Birmingham Unitary Development Plan, the alterations to the UDP have identified a specific site".

The Proposed Changes were subject to a public consultation period, which closed on 12 December 2003.

My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister is now considering responses to the Proposed Changes. I cannot comment further on them at this stage.

Council Tax

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will raise the single person discount on council tax for single pensioners from 25 per cent.; and if he will make a statement. [148231]

Mr. Raynsford: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has no plans to change the single persons discount for pensioners. Not all pensioners are on a low income and council tax benefit exists to help those that are. Steps are being taken to ensure that those who are eligible, including many pensioners, do take up their entitlement. We are also removing the current restriction on council tax benefit for those living in band F, G and H homes from next April.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans he has to reduce the number of older people receiving court summonses for non-payment of council tax, with particular reference to cases where they were entitled to full council tax benefit and the only reason for the arrears was the delay in processing their claim. [148232]

Mr. Raynsford: This is a matter for each individual billing authority, but the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister would expect authorities to take account of whether there was a likely entitlement to benefit in considering enforcement action.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what percentage of properties there are in each council tax band in each local authority area. [148733]

Mr. Raynsford: The information requested is available in the Library of the House.

Council Tax Disabled Bands

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the impact of changes to the disabled band council tax reduction on current recipients; and if he will make a statement. [147972]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government has made no changes to the disabled band reduction. It is for each individual billing authority to decide whether a property qualifies for Disabled Band Reduction when deciding entitlement, taking into account case law. An appeal against a decision can be made to the Valuation Tribunal.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many properties are in receipt of council tax disabled band reductions. [147973]

Mr. Raynsford: As at 3 November 2003 local authorities have reported that about 121,000 properties in England were subject to a reduction in their council tax band under the Council Tax (Reductions for Disabilities) Regulations 1992.

Dwellings (Conservation Areas)

Mr. Colman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether the recently announced proposals to free up land for development relate purely to councils blocking applications for housing schemes in conservation areas;

and whether they apply to single dwelling developments in the curtilage of other single dwellings in conservation areas. [147887]

Yvette Cooper: The recent reports suggesting that my right hon. Friend, the Deputy Prime Minister, was proposing to remove the planning powers of local councils to prevent new building in the countryside are untrue. My right hon. Friend has made no such announcement, and has no such plans.

This press speculation appears to have been based on the draft of a new Planning Policy Statement (PPS7), "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas". The draft was published for public consultation in September 2003 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It sets out proposed national planning policies to deliver sustainable rural communities by focussing most new development on towns and villages, and through strict control over new development in the open countryside. Draft PPS7 proposes that local planning authorities should adopt criteria-based policies in development plans for the location and design of rural development, rather than rely on locally designated landscape protection areas. It would remain for local planning authorities in the first instance to determine planning applications, having regard to these and other relevant policies.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is now considering the responses to the consultation draft. The views expressed will help inform the final version of PPS7.

Finance (Lancashire)

Mr. Lindsay Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what additional money *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley have received from his Department in each of the last three years, expressed in (i) monetary and (ii) percentage terms, using 2000–01 as a baseline. [148426]

Mr. Raynsford: Grant issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and its predecessor departments for Lancashire and Chorley in the last four years is tabled. Monetary and percentage increases using 2000–01 as a baseline are also shown:

	£ million	*Increase from 2000–01 (£ million)* [1]	*Percentage increase from 2000–01 (£ million)* [1]
Lancashire			
2000–01	628.2		
2001–02	644.5	16.3	2.6
2002–03	650.6	22.4	3.6
2003–04 *(a)*	712.4	84.2	13.4
Chorley			
2000–01	5.7		
2001–02	5.9	0.2	3.7
2002–03	6.1	0.4	7.6
2003–04 *(a)*	6.7	1.0	17.9

[1] The figures have not been adjusted.

Note:
Includes Revenue Support Grant, Redistributed Non-Domestic Rates, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (from 2001–02 onwards).

Source:
RS forms 2000–01 to 2002–03, RG forms 2001–02 to 2002–03, RA 2003–04 form and RA(SG) 2003–04 form.
Budgeted figures.

Fire Sprinklers

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what measures he has taken to improve fire safety using fire sprinklers; [148864]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the merits of compulsory installation of fire sprinklers in *(a)* commercial properties and *(b)* leisure facilities. [148865]

Phil Hope: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is keen to improve fire safety by all reasonable means and sprinklers are part of a package of measures that can be used in buildings.

Since 1992, guidance supporting the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations, which apply to most building work forming new and altered premises in England and Wales, has suggested the provision of sprinkler systems is necessary in commercial and leisure properties over certain area or height thresholds.

This was expanded in 2000 when the guidance was revised to set a limit of 2000m^2 for the size of any fire compartment in a single storey retail building, beyond which a suitable sprinkler system should be provided. This applies to new and extended retail buildings.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is also nearing the completion of a detailed study into the effectiveness of sprinkler systems in tackling fires in residential properties. The results of this work are being fed into the further development of national standards by the British Standards Institution (BSI) and are forming part of our considerations of the current review of the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations. The results of that work will shortly be publicly available enabling those involved with fire safety in buildings to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of residential sprinkler systems. During this review of the Building Regulations we will also be considering the role that sprinklers can play in all buildings and deciding whether the current thresholds in the guidance should be amended or indeed new ones introduced.

In the meantime, our Community Fire Safety programme continues to inform people of the risks associated with fire and the measures which can mitigate against its occurrence and subsequent effect, such as the use of fire detection and alarms and sprinkler systems. This programme has already been effective in reducing fire deaths and injuries from accidental fires.

Housing

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what quantity of land in the Thames Gateway needs to be re-allocated from employment uses to housing or mixed use to meet the Government's aspirations for delivering 120,000 additional houses by 2016. [149185]

Yvette Cooper: The figure of 120,000 is drawn from discussions on development capacity with local planning partners during the preparation of the Gateway initiative, and reflects both existing planning allocations for development and local perspectives on further capacity. Work is now under way with Regional

Planning Bodies to agree the detailed distribution of this growth, and prepare for its incorporation into Regional Strategic Statements.

Development in the Gateway focuses on its substantial reservoir of redundant and brownfield land, most of which will have originally been used historically for industrial and employment use. However, economic renewal is a parallel priority for the Gateway in order both to provide a stronger economic base for existing communities, and meet the employment needs of new residents. The area remains an important industrial and commercial location in the South East, and collectively the Gateway ports are the largest in the country. Retention and renewal of appropriate and good quality employment land to meet the needs of the local economy therefore remains important. The planning exercise now under way will therefore also be taking into account the appropriate future balance of housing and employment land.

Housing (Chorley)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many planning applications for housing in Chorley have been approved in each of the last five years. [148223]

Yvette Cooper: The number of planning applications for housing in the borough of Chorley approved in each of the last five years is as follows:

	Applications approved
1999	91
2000	58
2001	71
2002	69
2003	67
Total (January 1999 to December 2003)	356

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much land has been allocated for the next 10 years for new housing in Chorley. [148224]

Yvette Cooper: The adopted Chorley borough Local Plan Review allocates 100 hectares of land for housing for the period up to 2006. This figure excludes the former Royal Ordnance Factory site at Euxton, which is also expected to contribute 500 dwellings during the plan period, on the part of the site lying within Chorley borough.

Upon commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, Chorley borough council will be required to prepare a Local Development Framework to replace the Local Plan Review. In doing so the council should have regard to the annualised rates of average housing provision set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the North West, as applied by the emerging Lancashire Structure Plan. That currently proposes an annual rate of housing provision for Chorley in the period 2006–16 of 210 dwellings per year, net of clearance.

Housing (North Yorkshire)

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what recent representations he has received on affordable housing in North Yorkshire. [147208]

Yvette Cooper: In 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister received correspondence from the hon. Member and from Mr. Peter Annison, Chair of the Richmondshire Local Strategic Partnership, about affordable housing in North Yorkshire. Affordable housing in North Yorkshire featured in comments on the draft regional housing strategy in Spring last year, and is an issue identified in the sub-region's local authorities' housing strategies. The subject also features in Government Office discussions with North Yorkshire housing authorities, and the Government Office has received representations about funding for a project developed by Esk Moors Action for the Elderly. The North Yorkshire Housing Forum has submitted to the Regional Housing Board three proposals for different types of affordable housing for funding through the Board's 'transformational proposals' commissioning strand, for schemes to start in 2005–06.

Housing Strategies

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on how older people are involved in planning for housing strategies; and if he will make a statement. [148237]

Yvette Cooper: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has not commissioned any research on the involvement of older people in planning for housing strategies. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will, however, be supporting the work of the Housing for Older People Development Group (HOPDev), which will be examining older people's involvement in housing strategies as part of its programme of work for the coming year.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what steps he intends to take to ensure that council tenants are given information on the case for and against the large scale voluntary transfer of council housing proposed by North East Lincolnshire council. [148067]

Yvette Cooper: Tenants should be involved from the outset in the consideration of stock options and have a central role in deciding which option is pursued. To assist tenants in this the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister expects them to have access to good independent advice from the start.

Where housing transfer is the chosen option, the local authority should ensure that the information provided to tenants during the consultation process gives a full, fair and balanced picture of the implications of the proposed transfer as compared with staying with the council, so they can demonstrate that tenants have been properly consulted and informed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how he intends to ensure that his undertaking to London council tenants on 27 November 2003 regarding the information to be given to tenants about the implications of stock transfer or the creation of arm's length management organisations is implemented in the light of the decision by Mr. Justice Munby in case CO/6212/2003. [148068]

Yvette Cooper: The Communities Plan published in February 2003 made clear that council tenants must be fully informed and consulted at all stages in the process of appraising, choosing and implementing options for the future management and improvement of their homes. Tenants will have the support of Independent Tenant Advisers in this process. Effective tenant engagement is a key test for signing off the results of option appraisals and for giving approval for councils to implement these results. The information made available for tenants by their council and others at each stage should be sufficient to enable tenants to express an informed opinion.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many council houses were sold in each year since 1980; and how many houses were left in local authority ownership each year. [148279]

Yvette Cooper: The figures available for England are tabled as follows:

Thousand

	Council house sales			
	Right-to-Buy	*LSVT*	*Other sales*	*LA rented stock estimates*[1]
1979–80	n/a	n/a	54	4,764
1980–81	2	n/a	66	4,798
1981–82	105	n/a	23	4,819
1982–83	167	n/a	14	4,660
1983–84	106	n/a	16	4,561
1984–85	78	n/a	13	4,511
1985–86	72	n/a	10	4,439
1986–87	77	n/a	9	4,366
1987–88	94	n/a	19	4,277
1988–89	136	11	9	4,134
1989–90	134	14	9	3,991
1990–91	76	45	6	3,899
1991–92	48	11	6	3,844
1992–93	38	26	5	3,760
1993–94	45	30	7	3,666
1994–95	43	40	4	3,565
1995–96	32	45	2	3,470
1996–97	33	21	4	3,401
1997–98	41	33	4	3,309
1998–99	40	74	4	3,178
1999–2000	54	95	3	3,012
2000–01	52	132	1	2,812
2001–02	52	35	1	2,708
2002–03	63	166	1	2,457

[1] Up to 1988–89 stock data at 31 December, thereafter at 31 March.

Local Government (Employment)

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the change has been in the number of local government employees since 1997. [148443]

Phil Hope: Figures for Great Britain, which are available in an article published in 'Economic Trends' (September 2003), show that between 1997 and 2002 there was an increase of 148,000 in the total general local government employment category.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael Foster: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what asssessment he has made of the report by Professors Blanchflower and Oswald on Calculating an Appropriate Regional Funding Adjustment for Worcestershire, commissioned by Worcestershire county council; and if he will make a statement. [148037]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government will carefully consider the points made in Worcestershire county council's response to the consultation on the provisional local government finance settlement, alongside all others, as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister takes the final decisions on the settlement.

Local Government Planning

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether the Government will press local authorities reviewing the potential for re-allocating excess employment land to consider the option of withdrawing sites from their development plans, with particular reference to those which are identified as low priority for development according to the sequential approach set out in PPG3. [149190]

Yvette Cooper: Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: "Housing" (PPG3), requires local planning authorities to review all their non-housing allocations, including those for employment, and consider whether some of this land might better be used for housing or mixed use developments.

In July 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published a consultation document, "Supporting the Delivery of New Housing". This proposes to add new policy to PPG3 requiring local planning authorities to consider applications for housing development favourably on allocated industrial and employment sites. It highlighted the need to review employment sites and to identify those which no longer need to be retained for employment uses. Such sites would then be de-allocated at the next review of the plan, and consideration given to whether the sites should be allocated for other uses. Whether such sites are suitable for housing will depend on how they perform against PPG3 policies, including the sequential approach.

The consultation closed on 31 October 2003 and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is considering the responses received. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will publish the final policy, alongside practice guidance to help local planning authorities in reviewing employment land allocations, in due course.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the quantity of previously developed land that is *(a)* available for redevelopment and *(b)* likely to become available for redevelopment up to 2016. [149194]

Yvette Cooper: From the 2002 National Land Use Database of Previously Developed Land, an estimated 66,000 hectares of previously developed land are available for development in England. This includes both vacant and derelict land and land currently in use with known potential for redevelopment. New sites amounted to 14 per cent. of the 2001 stock of previously developed land. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has not made any forecasts of future flows of land likely to become available for redevelopment.

Mobile Phone Masts

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Stewart report on mobile phone masts in relation to

PPG8, with particular reference to the recommendations of the report on main beam transmissions next to sensitive sites. [149182]

Yvette Cooper: The Stewart report recommended that all telecommunications development be subject to the planning process in order to improve local consultation. On 22 August 2001, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister strengthened public consultation requirements on mast proposals of 15 metres and below and for masts on buildings and structures so that they are exactly the same as applications for planning permission. The changes to the planning arrangements also underlined that school governors must be consulted on all proposals for new masts on or near a school or college.

The Stewart Report also recommended that an independent random, on-going, audit of base stations be carried out to ensure that exposure guidelines are not exceeded. Ofcom (formerly the Radiocommunications Agency) is undertaking the audit, which has been running since December 2000 and has focused on school sites. The results have shown emissions ranging between several hundred to many thousand times below the public exposure guidelines set by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

Planning

Norman Baker: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many, and what percentage of recommendations from inspectors called in dealing with *(a)* planning appeals and *(b)* applications he overturned in each year since 1997. [148484]

Yvette Cooper: This information is only available for decisions taken since 1 April 2002 by the new Planning Central Casework Division (PCCD) established in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on that date to take over work previously done predominantly by Government Offices, Information on decisions administered by PCCD since April 2002 is tabled:

Year	Total appeal decisions	Inspector's recommendation overturned	Total call in decisions	Inspector's recommendation overturned
2002–2003	124	5 (4%)	59	12 (20%)
2003–2004[1]	179	16 (9%)	72	8 (11%)

[1] First three quarters

In relation to decisions made before the setting up of PCCD, the available information (which does not distinguish between called in applications and appeals) is tabled:

Year	Secretary of State decisions	Inspector's Recommendation overturned
1999–2000	184	13 (7%)
2000–01	189	22 (12%)
2001–02	180	13 (7%)
2002–03[1]	64	17 (26%)
2003–04[1]	5	2 (40%)

[1] First three quarters

Comprehensive information is not held centrally for the period April 1997 to March 1999, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

[1] These decisions are in respect of inquiries which closed before 1 April 2002.

Planning Guidance

John Mann: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what account planning authorities in England are required to take of *(a)* written departmental guidelines circulated to them and *(b)* ministerial speeches in Parliament. [147970]

Yvette Cooper: Written Departmental Guidance and Ministerial speeches in Parliament are capable of being material considerations which local planning authorities must take into account when exercising their planning powers (for both forward planning and development control purposes). Central Government policy may be communicated to local planning authorities in various ways (for example by written guidance or oral statements) and may be taken into account by a local planning authority, irrespective of the way in which it is communicated. The weight to be attached to it may vary, however, depending on how formally it is expressed.

Mrs. May: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what guidance he has provided to local authorities on the incorporation of estimates for climate change into the definition of floodplain for planning purposes. [148281]

Yvette Cooper: The flood zones in the risk-based sequential test in Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 25 "Development and flood risk", which was published in July 2001, are based on Environment Agency mapping of the risks at the time of map preparation. This does not include any allowance for climate change. However, local planning authorities and developers are advised to take account of climate change in assessing the risks from flooding. PPG 25 recommends a minimum standard of flood defence that takes account of the allowances for climate change contained in the "Project appraisal guidance for flood and coastal defence", published by the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1999.

Climate change allowances have been re-examined by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) following publication of new climate change scenarios in 2002. Further guidance was published by DEFRA in 2003, which does not differ in its essentials from that already cited in PPG 25.

Property Revaluations

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research his Department has commissioned on the impact upon pensioners of the revaluation of properties in England in 2007; and if he will make a statement. [148235]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government acknowledged the criticisms of council tax in the 2001 White Paper, "Strong Local Leadership, Quality Public Services". Consequently the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has established the Balance of Funding review to consider possible reforms to the current arrangements. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has commissioned various research studies to inform the review including analysis of the potential impact of

revaluation on different regions and groups of council tax payers. The review will be considering proposals for change in the course of the next few months.

Registered Social Landlords

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the registered social landlords under investigation by the Housing Corporation; and if he will make a statement. [148728]

Yvette Cooper: The Housing Corporation is responsible for some 2,000 registered social landlords in England. To comply with the Corporation's Regulatory Code, all registered social landlords provide the Corporation with financial and regulatory information. The Corporation conducts a range of regulatory reviews as part of its routine regulatory exchanges. The Corporation has statutory powers to direct an inquiry into the affairs of a registered social landlord. There is currently only one such inquiry under way, into Solon Wandsworth Housing Association Ltd.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what representations he has received from registered social landlords on allowing them to exceed the cap in relation to the rent increases set down in the Government's rent restructuring policy; and if he will make a statement. [148729]

Yvette Cooper: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was created in May 2002. Since this time, we have received four written representations from registered social landlords (RSLs) seeking a revision to the cap on rents of properties with the highest capital values which is incorporated into our rent restructuring policy. The current cap in 2003–04 ranges from £87.30 for a bedsit to £102.70 for a property with four or more bedrooms. For the small number of properties affected by this safeguard, the maximum increase in future years is set at Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 1 per cent. a year.

As set out in our initial policy, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is currently conducting a three-year review of the policy, with the aim of completing this in the spring.

Relationship Managers

Mr. Brady: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his Answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 149W, on relationship managers, which authorities rated as weak in 2002 are involved in the on-going discussions with his Department over arrangements to accept assistance from his Department on a voluntary basis. [148072]

Mr. Raynsford: Officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are discussing with Wolverhampton, Northamptonshire, Havering, Merton, Enfield, Milton Keynes and Nottingham, whether those councils would wish to develop their relationship with Government through a named official.

Mr. Brady: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his Answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 149W, on relationship managers, what assessment was made of Trafford Metropolitan borough council's corporate capacity to improve; and what the outcome was of that assessment. [148073]

Mr. Raynsford: The Audit Commission carried out a corporate assessment of Trafford Metropolitan borough council published as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of the authority in December 2002.

The Audit Commission's corporate assessment team gave a rating for the council's overall ability to improve as two out of a possible four and their overall performance was assessed as 'weak'.

Following the CPA assessment, the Audit Commission orchestrated an improvement planning process with the council, involving relevant representatives from government departments and inspectorates. This process established the priorities for improvement and agreed a co-ordinated and focused programme of follow up inspections based on the findings of the CPA assessment. Trafford Metropolitan borough council's priorities for improvement are set out in their Best Value Performance Plan, published in June 2003.

Mr. Brady: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his Answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 149W, on relationship managers, what discussions have taken place with Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council following the comprehensive performance assessment; and whether he will appoint a relationship manager to improve Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council services. [148074]

Mr. Raynsford: Since taking up his post in September 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Director of Local Government Practice in the North-West has met with the Chief Executive of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council on several occasions, as part of his broader brief. In particular, he has provided the council with advice on the availability of funding through the capacity building programme run jointly by the Government and the Local Government Association.

Trafford have not requested that a Lead Official should be appointed.

Mr. Brady: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 149W, on relationship managers, what criteria he used to distinguish between councils rated as weak in 2002 when considering the appointment of lead officials to work with councils. [148075]

Mr. Raynsford: Following the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment announcements in December 2002, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister appointed lead officials to engage directly to secure recovery in those authorities classified as 'poor' and those categorised as 'weak' with a corporate capacity score of one, indicating little scope for managing recovery.

In addition, other councils classified as 'weak' can volunteer to develop their relationship with Government through a named official.

Sandwell MBC *v.* Perks

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many properties he estimates will be affected by the judgment in the High Court Case R (Sandwell MBC)

v. Perks and the West Midlands (West) Valuation Tribunal (2003) EWH 1749 Admin; and if he will make a statement. [147974]

Mr. Raynsford: Entitlement to disabled band reduction is a matter for individual billing authorities. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister therefore has not estimated how many properties might be affected by this decision.

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make available supplementary funding to local authorities which incur expenditure as a consequence of the judgement in the High Court Case R (Sandwell MBC) v Perks and the West Midlands (West) Valuation Tribunal (2003) EWH 1749 Admin. [147975]

Mr. Raynsford: No.

Social Housing

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what percentage of new build is required to be social housing for *(a)* rent and *(b)* shared ownership. [148424]

Yvette Cooper: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister does not set annual targets centrally for local authorities on social housing.

Planning policies for affordable housing are set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 3, "Housing", and in Circular 6/98, "Planning for Affordable Housing". They advise that where local planning authorities are able to demonstrate a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, based on up-to-date surveys and other data of local need, they should indicate in their local plan how many affordable homes need to be provided throughout the plan area, and set indicative targets for specific suitable sites (expressed either as numbers of homes or a percentage of the homes on the site).

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many council houses were sold in Chorley in the last five years; and how many properties remained in local authority ownership in each of those years. [148425]

Yvette Cooper: The figures reported by Chorley to the Office of Deputy Prime Minister and its predecessor departments are tabled as follows:

	Council house sales	*LA rented stock estimates at end of year*
1998–99	35	3,477
1999–2000	44	3,437
2000–01	41	3,393
2001–02	52	3,367
2002–03	95	3,271

Sustainable Communities

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on progress since the announcement of the *(a)* Milton Keynes, *(b)* Ashford and *(c)* Stansted Corridor Sustainable Communities; how much public money has been spent; how much private sector capital has been committed; how much land has been acquired; how much land will be acquired; and over what timescale. [148203]

Yvette Cooper: There has been considerable progress in the growth areas since the announcement in July 2002—"Creating Sustainable Communities: Making it Happen: Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas".

Partners are well advanced in developing the £88 million worth of projects approved in July as part of the Government's Sustainable Communities funding package and we are on target to meet the £21.5 million allocated in this year's programme. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's further announcement of 14 January 2004 allocated an additional £63 million to a further 27 projects. £11.5 million has been allocated to schemes which will deliver new and improved strategic green spaces in the growth areas, including a new regional park in the Nene Valley, and a significant expansion of the Forest of Marston Vale in Bedfordshire. Over £50 million has been awarded to 18 other projects to provide key transport and economic infrastructure including new bridges and roads to access sites for 6,850 homes that would otherwise be blocked.

The vast majority of development within the housing growth areas will be undertaken by the private sector but detailed information on each investment is not collected. In addition there will be major investment programmes on commercial sites—such as the £800 million programme for Central Milton Keynes, involving English Partnerships, Milton Keynes Council and a number of private investors. Many schemes funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are, however, designed to enable local partners to lever in specific private sector commitments to infrastructure by unblocking barriers to investment. In most cases negotiations are ongoing, but examples of match funding already committed include the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's commitment of £10.6 million for road access to the Wellingborough East development site, which is matched pound for pound by Bovis Homes.

There are no targets for land acquisition in the growth areas; the need for land assembly by the public sector will be determined on a case by case basis. Several of the projects for which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is already providing funding will facilitate the assembly of parcels of land for public benefit, such as the provision of affordable housing and community facilities (for example in Harlow), or high quality green spaces within or around the growth areas, as in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. The funding will also facilitate the remediation of heavily contaminated land and the preparation of sites for release to the private sector for development.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which Government Departments are involved in plans for the development of the *(a)* Milton Keynes, *(b)* Ashford and *(c)* Stansted Corridor Sustainable Communities; and what commitments they have made. [148205]

Yvette Cooper: The July Statement—"Sustainable Communities: Making it Happen: Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas"—set out how growth area projects

would be taken forward across Government, with schemes including transport, health, education, sports and green spaces. For example, transport commitments include the £1.6 billion announced by Alistair Darling in July, and most recently the Department for Transport's Local Transport Programme announcement of December 2003, which included schemes worth £221 million across the three growth areas.

A wide range of public agencies are involved. Bringing more agencies together with local partners to look at strategic infrastructure issues is the purpose of the Inter Regional Board being established for the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area, which will hold its first meeting on 11 February 2004.

Unfit Housing

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assistance is available for repairing structurally unfit houses owned by the *(a)* elderly and *(b)* disabled; and if he will make a statement. [148236]

Yvette Cooper: Local authorities have wide ranging powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2004 to provide assistance for the repair, improvement or adaptation of any living accommodation in their area. Such assistance, which can be made available at the discretion of the authority, may be in any form, for example by way of a grant, loan or loan guarantee, and can be provided either directly by the council or through a third party. The Order provides that before using these powers the local authority must publish a policy setting out the range of assistance that they will make available.

Funding for this assistance is available from an authority's single capital housing pot and in 2002–03 total local authority expenditure in England on housing renewal grants (excluding disabled facilities grant) was £259 million.

Water Supply

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what additional water supply infrastructure is likely to be required for the additional homes proposed for the Thames Gateway up to 2016. [149184]

Yvette Cooper: Each water supply company produces a water resources plan that looks forward 25 years. The companies update their plans annually, which are then reviewed by the Environment Agency for consistency with its national and regional water resources strategies. The companies serving the Thames Gateway need firm estimates of growth to enable them to identify new water supply and disposal infrastructure requirements and factor these in to their business plans. Companies are therefore working in close liaison with local and regional planners and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to establish both infrastructure requirements and the scope for achieving water efficiency savings in the new homes through sustainable development. A summary of their final investment plans will be available in late April, but these will cover investment required to meet the totality of demand forecast in their areas not just that which is within the Thames Gateway.

West Midlands Regional Planning

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he plans to publish the final version of the West Midlands Regional Planning Guidance. [148014]

Yvette Cooper: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is currently considering responses to the public consultation on my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister's Proposed Changes to Draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the West Midlands. We hope to publish the final RPG in the spring this year.

Wychavon District Council

Mr. Luff: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what account he took, in setting the revenue support grant for Wychavon District Council for 2004–05, of cost pressures on the council flowing from *(a)* administering the new local plan, *(b)* implementing the law on high hedges, *(c)* administering the Supporting People programme, *(d)* deregulation of building control services, *(e)* ending of Market Towns Initiative funding, *(f)* ending of Local Government On-Line funding and *(g)* compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000; [146549]

(2) what account he took in setting the revenue support grant for Wychavon District Council for 2004–05, of cost pressures on the council flowing from *(a)* implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 on council property, *(b)* compliance with new legislation on homelessness, *(c)* provision for migrant workers, *(d)* changes to insurance premiums, *(e)* audit and inspection fees, *(f)* implementation of new licensing arrangements, *(g)* provision of recycling and waste services and *(h)* increases in employer contributions to pension funds; [146550]

(3) what account he took, in setting the revenue support grant for Wychavon District Council for 2004–05, of cost pressures on the council flowing from *(a)* the requirement for more consultation with the community to improve local accountability and community leadership, *(b)* the administration of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, *(c)* further requirements for dealing with stray dogs, *(d)* administration of the standards regime for regulation of district and parish councils, *(e)* the need to have the financial capacity to improve following Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspection and *(f)* the requirement to develop a cultural strategy. [146555]

Mr. Raynsford: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's proposals for the funding of local authority revenue spending in 2004–05 take into account the cost pressures and new burdens on local government identified with the Local Government Association in the context of the Spending Review 2002, which set the spending plans up to 2005–06. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has added to those totals to reflect additional pressures and new burdens since the announcement of Spending Review 2002. Additionally, Wychavon District Council has received specific grants for certain items identified by the hon. Member, for example from the Waste Recycling Challenge Fund.

The Government's proposals for 2004–05 provide for an increase in total general grant of £2.4 billion or 5.5 per cent. Wychavon District Council would receive an increase of £5.6 million or 4.2 per cent. on a like-for-like basis compared with 2003–04.

Most Government funding to local authorities is paid through general grant and is for councils to allocate in line with their statutory duties, their priorities and the wishes of their electorate.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 January 2004

HEALTH

Organ Donation

16. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the findings of the most recent survey of people's perceptions of organ donation. [148800]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Research has confirmed that 90 per cent. of the UK population support organ donation and nearly 20 per cent. have registered their intention to donate on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Children's Hospices

17. **Mr. Reed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the funding of children's hospices. [148801]

Dr. Ladyman: Funding for children's hospices is available through primary care trusts which are responsible for funding health care for their resident population. Local authorities can also fund services, including children's respite care. The New Opportunities Fund has provided £48 million over three years in support of palliative care projects for children.

Hepatitis C

18. **Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the proposed introduction of a compensation scheme for hepatitis C sufferers infected with contaminated blood products. [148802]

Miss Melanie Johnson: Work on the detail of the scheme is being finalised and we hope to be in a position to announce the details soon.

World Health Organisation

19. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's contribution to the work of the World Health Organisation. [148803]

Mr. Hutton: The Department of Health is responsible for the United Kingdom's annual subscription to the World Health Organisation. This contribution is based on the United Nation scales of assessment, with the UK contributing—in 2003–04—5.5 per cent. of WHO's regular programme budget, or £13.5 million. In addition the Department supports WHO in practical ways, including secondment of staff, membership of expert committees and work in the formal meetings of the governing bodies of WHO.

NHS Dentistry

20. **Shona McIsaac:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the provision of NHS dental treatment in North Lincolnshire. [148804]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Government remain committed to ensuring that national health service dentistry is available to all who need it and seek it. We recognise however that access to NHS dentistry can be difficult in some areas. We have announced additional resources totalling £59 million over this year and next to support dental access.

A NHS support team is working with the hardest pressed areas, including North East Lincolnshire, and we hope that this and other local initiatives will ease the pressure on dental services in North Lincolnshire. We have also made available a one-off payment of £30,000 to North Lincolnshire Primary Care Trust to improve access to NHS dentists. The PCT will use this money to extend a general dental practice in the area, which will allow that practice to register more NHS patients on an agreed basis over a three year period.

We are also working with the PCTs and dentists in North and North East Lincolnshire to see what support can be provided to move dentists on to personal dental services arrangements, which would take them off the bureaucratic treadmill of item of service fees.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the impact of the 2001 restrictions on non-EU-trained dentists practising in the United Kingdom on the availability of dentistry. [147504]

Ms Rosie Winterton: From 2001, the General Dental Council (GDC) ceased making visitations to dental schools in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, with the result that dentists who qualified after this date and wish to practise here have to sit the GDC's international qualifying examination. The number of dentists from those countries admitted to the GDC register since 2000 is shown in the table.

	Australia	*New Zealand*	*South Africa*
2000	174	134	876
2001	178	142	938
2002	168	136	1,022
2003	168	125	1,037

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many foreign-trained dentists were practising in the United Kingdom in each year since 1990, broken down by *(a)* headcount and *(b)* full-time equivalents. [147505]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The table shows the number of general dental service (GDS) foreign-trained dentists practising in England and Wales in each year since 1993. Information is not available for years before 1993.

Information on a full-time equivalent basis is not available. GDS dentists can vary the amount of dental work they do and the proportion carried out in the GDS.

General Dental Service: Number of foreign trained dentists practising in England and Wales—September each year

	Number of dentists
1993	1,556
1994	1,497
1995	1,530
1996	1,701
1997	1,896
1998	2,180
1999	2,475
2000	2,713
2001	2,869
2002	2,950
2003	3,004

Notes:

1. Dentists include principal, assistant and vocational dental practitioners.
2. Dentists exclude those whose status is currently shown as Statutory Exam or Awaiting Entry.

Respite Care

21. **Mr. Gordon Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to promote respite care. [148805]

Dr. Ladyman: The Government are committed to seeing a range of services available locally for people who need services and their carers.

The carers grant has provided an extra £325 million since 1999 to support local councils in arranging breaks services for carers.

Charles Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role he envisages for the private sector in providing respite care facilities for people with learning difficulties. [148687]

Dr. Ladyman: The private sector has an important role in providing respite care and short break services for people with learning disabilities and we envisage that this will continue to be the case. Respite care and short break services should provide high quality and flexible support to people with learning disabilities and their families. Such support can be provided in different ways by agencies from a variety of sectors including the private sector. People with learning disabilities can also use direct payments to directly purchase for themselves services, from a variety of sources, to meet their assessed needs include respite care and short breaks.

Ehler-Danlos Disease

22. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will fund research into Ehler-Danlos disease. [148806]

Dr. Ladyman: The Medical Research Council (MRC) is not currently funding any research into Ehlers-Danlos though it does fund a number of research projects into connective tissue and also into collagen physiology. The MRC always welcomes high quality applications for support into any aspect of human health and these are judged in open competition with other demands on funding.

Coronary Heart Disease

23. **Dr. Iddon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the most recent statistics for the mortality rate from coronary heart disease are in the area covered by the Bolton primary care trust. [148807]

Miss Melanie Johnson: In 2002, the most recent year for which data are available, the mortality rate from coronary heart disease for residents of Bolton Primary Care Trust was 230 male deaths per 100,000 population and 108 female deaths per 100,000 population.

Audiology Services

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what performance indicators are in place for NHS audiology services. [149081]

Dr. Ladyman: There are no national performance indicators for national health service audiology services. It is for primary care trusts to plan these services in response to the needs of their local communities.

Delayed Discharges

Sue Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to fine social services departments in the case of delayed discharges in community hospitals. [148370]

Dr. Ladyman: We plan to extend the system of reimbursement for delayed discharges to all hospital patients in a phased way, once it begins to make an impact in the acute sector.

Emergency Readmissions

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reason his Department no longer collects information for patients aged 75 and over on emergency readmissions to hospital within 28 days of discharge. [149008]

Dr. Ladyman: The target, and subsequently the collection of monitoring information on emergency readmissions, was changed from that relating only to patients aged 75 because it was perceived as being ageist in that older people could be denied access to hospital services in order to meet a performance target. Emergency readmissions targets and data collections have, therefore, covered all ages since April 2002.

Foundation Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his Answer of 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 602W, on foundation hospitals, if he will list those applications for foundation hospital status which have been submitted to the Independent Regulator. [148409]

Mr. Hutton: I refer my hon. Friend to my written ministerial statement of 19 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 49WS.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library copies of the preparatory materials submitted by the national health service trusts seeking the Secretary of State's support for an application for NHS foundation trust status. [147933]

Mr. Hutton: I refer the hon. Member to the response I gave on Monday 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column. 189W. I will arrange for copies of the applications submitted to the independent regulator to be placed in the Library. I will also arrange for the Department's summary of each applicant to be placed in the Library in due course.

Geriatricians

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* consultant geriatricians and *(b)* geriatricians below the level of consultant were employed by the NHS in each year since 1997. [148827]

Mr. Hutton: The table shows the number of consultants in geriatric medicine and geriatricians below the level of consultant who were employed by the national health service in each year since 1997.

Hospital, Public Health Medicine and Community Health Services (HCHS): Consultant grade and other staff with a specialty in geriatric medicine

England[1] *Number (headcount)*

	All staff	*of which:*	
		Consultants	*Non-consultants*[3]
June 2003	[2]	894	[2]
2002	2,707	861	1,846
2001	2,558	781	1,777
2000	2,572	767	1,805
1999	2,505	719	1,786
1998	2,560	712	1,848
1997	2,527	677	1,850

[1] Data as at 30 September except 2003, where data as at 30 June.

[2] Data not available. This is due to 2003 data being taken from the mini census, which collected consultants only.

[3] Grades below the level of consultant include staff grade, associate specialist, registrar group, senior house officer, house officer, hospital practitioner, clinical assistant and other staff.

Source:

Department of Health medical and dental workforce census.

The number of consultants employed by the NHS in geriatric medicine has increased by 32 per cent. between September 1997 and June 2003.

Health and Social Services (Lincolnshire)

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding has been provided *(a)* in absolute terms and *(b)* per head of population served by the Trust for the United Lincolnshire NHS Trust in each year since 1995. [148474]

Dr. Ladyman: Funding is not allocated to national health service trusts. NHS trusts as providers of services receive the bulk of their revenue funding from commissioning by primary care trusts. Since 2003–04 funding has been allocated to PCTs, and before then to health authorities.

The table shows cash allocations and allocations per head of population for Lincolnshire health authority, East Lincolnshire PCT and Lincolnshire South West Teaching PCT. Prior to 1996–97 allocations were made to regional health authorities, no information is available for Lincolnshire.

Period	*Total allocation (£000)*	*Allocation per weighted head of population (£)*	*Allocation per unweighted head of population (£)*
Lincolnshire HA			
1996–97	256,520	431	416
1997–98	266,305	448	428
1998–99	278,608	463	445
1999–2000	394,990	632	615
2000–01	429,691	681	664
2001–02	469,403	736	717
2002–03	519,957	811	785
East Lincolnshire PCT			
2003–04	241,038	884	904
2004–05	264,418	970	991
2005–06	288,857	1,060	1,083
Lincolnshire South West Teaching PCT			
2003–04	143,841	934	785
2004–05	156,714	1,018	855
2005–06	170,113	1,105	928
West Lincolnshire PCT			
2003–04	180,080	887	855
2004–05	197,501	973	938
2005–06	215,736	1,063	1,025

Note:

1999–2000 is the first year of unified allocations covering HCHS, prescribing and GMS cash limited. These figures are not comparable with those for previous years which cover HCHS only.

Source:

1996–97 to 1999–2000 Health Authority Cash limits Exposition Book

2001–02 Health Authority Revenue Resource Limits Exposition Book

2003–04 to 2006 PCT Revenue Resource Limits Exposition Book

Independent Diagnostic and Treatment Centres

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to require independent diagnostic and treatment centres to have patients' forums. [148680]

Ms Rosie Winterton: There are no plans to require independent treatment centres to have patients' forums. The patients forums set up for primary care trusts (PCTs) that commission services from independent treatment centres can monitor and review services that the treatment centre provides, as well as carry out their other functions in relation to them. Directions issued to PCTs on 27 November 2003 require PCTs to ensure that contracts they place with all independent sector providers includes provisions that:

require those providers to allow entry to patients' forums to enter and inspect premises where those services are provided; and

require those providers to give information in relation to those services to patients' forums when requested.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rights of access to *(a)* people, *(b)* papers and *(c)* premises (i) overview and scrutiny committees and (ii) primary care trust patient forums will have in respect of independent diagnostic and treatment centres operating within their area. [148679]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* In relation to the operation of independent treatment centres, overview and scrutiny committees (OSCs) do not have rights of access to people, papers or premises of independent treatment centres. OSCs that

want to scrutinise independent services should do so via the primary care trust (PCT) that commissioned the services.

Patients' forums have a right to enter and inspect independent premises and the right to information only if the contract between the PCT and the provider is compliant with directions issued to PCTs last November. These directions require PCTs to ensure that contracts they place with all independent sector providers include provisions that require those providers to allow entry to patients' forums to enter and inspect premises where those services are provided and require those providers to give information in relation to those services to patients' forums when requested.

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how public-patient involvement will be delivered for independent diagnostic and treatment centres. [148682]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Primary care trusts (PCTs) are responsible for ensuring that section 11 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001—the duty to involve and consult patients and the public—is complied with when making arrangements for another organisation, person or people to provide services. This includes independent treatment centres (ITCs).

PCT patients' forums have powers to monitor and review the services provided by ITCs. Contracts between PCTs and ITCs will include a requirement to allow PCT patients' forums to enter the premises of ITCs.

Local authority overview and scrutiny committees with the power to review the planning, provision and operation of services will be able to use those powers in relation to ITCs, through the scrutiny of those PCTs which contract with ITCs.

Long-term Care

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his estimate is of the additional cost of implementing in full the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Long-term Care. [143376]

Dr. Ladyman: The cost of introducing free personal care for everyone in England has been estimated at £1.5 billion. The cost would increase to £1.8 billion with equivalent payments to the devolved Administrations. None of this extra expenditure, were it to be made in this way, would increase choice or services available to older people.

Mid-Essex Hospital Trust

Mr. Simon Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were waiting for in-patient treatment in the Mid-Essex Hospital Trust area at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many people have been waiting over 12 months for in-patient treatment. [147989]

Dr. Ladyman *[pursuant to his answer, 15 January 2004, Official Report, column 858W]:* I regret my previous answer was incomplete. The response should read as follows.

As of 30 November 2003, 7,972 patients were waiting for elective inpatient admission, and no patients were waiting over 12 months. The source of this data is the Department of Health monthly monitoring.

Miller Group

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list contracts his Department has awarded to the Miller Group in each of the last three years. [149431]

Mr. Hutton: No contracts have been awarded by the Department of Health to the Miller Group in any of the last three years.

National Fruit Scheme

Ms Oona King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the monitoring and roll out of the national fruit scheme and its impact on the consumption of fruit by four to six-year-olds in deprived areas. [148793]

Dr. John Reid: Following successful national piloting, the National School Fruit Scheme will be extended nationwide by the end of 2004. It already operates in four regions and covers 35 of the 50 most deprived wards in England.

This extension means that more than 2 million children will now benefit.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will clarify the National Institute for Clinical Excellence advice on the provision of medicines to those patients diagnosed with osteoporosis. [148276]

Dr. Ladyman: The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is consulting on the first draft of a technology appraisal on the use of medicines for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis and prevention of osteoporotic fractures in postmenopausal women. The document does not constitute NICE's formal guidance on this technology: the recommendations are preliminary and may change after the consultation. The draft document is available on the NICE website at www.nice.org.uk.

Personal Care Charges

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the total charges collected from local authorities for personal care in each of the last six years. [144294]

Dr. Ladyman: The information shown in the table shows total resident/service user contributions to care costs including personal care. The Department of Health does not collect information on resident/service user contributions for personal care only.

Income from client contributions (sales, fees and charges)—England

£000

	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02
Older people (aged 65 or over) including older mentally ill						
Nursing home placements	228,539	314,022	352,600	417,420	473,685	486,375
Residential care home placements	583,604	633,776	738,424	819,193	909,022	943,997
Home care	93,969	113,876	140,433	159,148	170,310	173,915
Total older people	906,112	1,061,674	1,231,457	1,395,761	1,553,017	1,604,287
Adults aged under 65 with a physical disability or sensory impairment						
Nursing home placements	9,060	12,772	13,784	18,597	21,574	25,289
Residential care home placements	29,361	34,953	39,999	44,071	46,958	48,680
Home care	5,820	8,901	10,408	16,438	17,508	16,709
Total adults aged under 65 with a physical disability etc.	44,241	56,626	64,191	79,106	86,040	90,678
Adults aged under 65 with learning disabilities						
Nursing home placements	4,697	7,296	7,846	7,115	9,767	9,810
Residential care home placements	129,471	153,623	200,848	212,472	216,321	240,966
Home care	2,012	3,397	7,328	8,822	10,195	14,039
Total adults aged under 65 with learning disabilities	136,180	164,316	216,022	228,409	236,283	264,815
Adults aged under 65 with mental health needs						
Nursing home placements	8,835	6,713	8,947	10,503	10,104	11,168
Residential care home placements	39,634	47,163	51,193	59,765	52,098	52,872
Home care	1,164	1,424	1,470	1,920	1,952	1,982
Total adults aged under 65 with mental health needs	49,633	55,300	61,610	72,188	64,153	66,022
All adults and older people						
Nursing home placements	251,131	340,803	383,177	453,635	515,130	532,642
Residential care home placements	782,070	869,515	1,030,464	1,135,501	1,224,398	1,286,515
Home care	102,965	127,598	159,639	186,328	199,964	206,645
Total adults and older people	1,136,166	1,337,916	1,573,280	1,775,464	1,939,492	2,025,802

PET Scanners

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of PET scanners in the NHS. [148062]

Miss Melanie Johnson: In response to requests from national health service and research stakeholders the Department of Health will shortly publish a framework for positron emission tomography (PET) scanning for consultation. This framework will set out a national policy position for PET in the NHS which will set out, from the evidence, which tumour groups would benefit from PET scanning, likely future demand, and the optimal configuration and location of PET scanners.

Vaccinations (Staff)

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his Department's policy is on the provision of smallpox vaccinations for medical personnel. [148762]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* As part of its overall preparedness strategy for dealing with bioterrorism, the Department has produced a detailed smallpox plan. This plan requires that each standard Government region should have a regional response group consisting of five response teams each comprising of five members vaccinated against smallpox. Corresponding arrangements are being made for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This cohort of healthcare workers would be the first responders in investigating any suspected or confirmed cases of smallpox and therefore need to be protected against the threat of disease. A programme to vaccinate the necessary cohort for England commenced in December 2002 and to date we have vaccinated 276 healthcare workers; exceeding our target of 261. The cohort comprises infectious disease physicians and paediatricians, public health physicians, microbiologists/virologists, acute care and communicable disease control nurses and occupational health staff. In addition, a further target of 90 ambulance staff to be vaccinated has recently been set for England. These are the only personnel being offered smallpox vaccination in the absence of disease.

While there is no evidence of a specific threat of smallpox attack on the United Kingdom, it is sensible and prudent to ensure that the national health service can deal effectively with any potential threat.

The Department's smallpox plan is available in the Library and also on the Department's web-site at www.doh.gov.uk/smallpox/smallpox.htm.

Variant CJD

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the current funds are in the discretionary fund available to victims and families of new variant CJD; what the outstanding claims are on that discretionary fund; and if he will make a statement on the future operation of the discretionary fund. [145112]

Miss Melanie Johnson: It was in recognition of the special plight of those affected by variant CJD (vCJD) that the Government established the vCJD Trust which oversees the payment of no-fault compensation to the families involved.

The terms of the trust were agreed with representatives of the families following a lengthy period of consultation. The compensation scheme provides for payments to be made in respect of 250 cases up to a maximum of £55 million.

On top of this £55 million, the Government also agreed to meet the families' request to pay a further £50,000 to every victim or their family in each of the first 250 cases.

Additionally, the trustees can make extra payments in prescribed circumstances where particular hardship is involved and where the trustees consider that further payment should be made. Such payments can be made from the discretionary fund although there is no entitlement as of right for those making claims upon this fund since further payments from it are entirely at the discretion of the trustees.

To date, the trustees of the vCJD Trust have made payments of £1,509,353.99 from the discretionary fund in respect of 96 cases. This leaves a balance of £3,490,646.01 in the discretionary fund.

Further information about the vCJD Trust will be available on the trust's website www.vcjdtrust.co.uk shortly, to which the trust's first Annual Report covering the period 15 March 2002 to 5 April 2003 will be added in the next couple of weeks.

I will place a copy of the trust's report in the Library.

TREASURY

Banking Regulation

Keith Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to improve the level of supervision of banks. [149499]

Ruth Kelly: The regime for prudential supervision of banks is kept under constant review, both at home and internationally, in forums such as the European Union and the Basle Committee on Banking Supervision. On 1 June 1998, responsibility for the supervision of banks moved from the Bank of England to the Financial Services Authority. The legislative framework for the regulation of banks was subsequently reformed under the Financial Services and Markets Act; this came into effect on 1 December 2001.

Household Incomes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the income thresholds were for each decile of the household income distribution in *(a)* 1997–98 and *(b)* the most recent available 12-month period. [149640]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Jim Cousins dated 20 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking for the income threshold for each decile of the household income distribution in 1997–98 and the most recent available 12-month period, which is 2001–02.

Estimates in the following table are produced from the Office for National Statistics' analysis "The effects of taxes and benefits on household income" published on the National Statistics website on October 21st 2003 at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/taxesbenefits. The analysis includes measures of income inequality for the United Kingdom as a whole based on data from the Expenditure and Food Survey.

The table shows, for the UK in 1997–98 and 2001–02, the boundaries between equivalised disposable income deciles for all households. Equivalisation is a standard methodology that takes into account the size and composition of households and adjusts their incomes to recognise differing demands on resources. For example, the 1st decile boundary is the income level below which one tenth of households are estimated to lie.

Income decile	*1997–98*	*2001–02*
Bottom	6,766	8,214
2nd	8,504	10,356
3rd	10,146	12,361
4th	11,922	14,670
5th	13,917	17,179
6th	16,342	19,910
7th	19,316	23,691
8th	23,457	28,469
9th	30,451	37,095
Top		

Source:
Office for National Statistics, based on the analysis 'The effects of taxes and benefits on household income', published on the National Statistics website and in *Economic Trends*.

Inland Revenue

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to produce an Inland Revenue leaflet covering all the Inland Revenue help available for those with special needs. [148385]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue are researching the most appropriate methods, including leaflets, of effectively publicising the help available to those with special needs and have been working closely with the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group.

Ministerial Meetings

Keith Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met *(a)* Sir Eddie George and *(b)* Mr. Brian Quinn. [149497]

Ruth Kelly: Ministers and civil servants have meetings with a wide range of organisations and individuals as part of the process of policy development and analysis. As with previous Administrations, it is not this Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings. All such contacts are conducted in accordance with the Ministerial Code, the Civil Service Code and Guidance for Civil Servants: Contacts with Lobbyists, as appropriate.

National Savings

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his plans for the National Savings Ordinary Account as they effect *(a)* existing and *(b)* potential new account holders. [149483]

Ruth Kelly: National Savings and Investments will shortly launch a new savings account in response to changing customer needs. The new account will replace the Ordinary Account, which was introduced in 1861 and has not kept pace with changes in the savings market. The Ordinary Account is expensive to run and therefore only offers modest returns to savers.

The new account has been designed to meet these changing customer needs and will be straightforward and simple to operate, offering customers greater flexibility in the way they manage their savings. They will be able to make deposits at post offices, by telephone and by post and they will be given an account card which will allow cash withdrawals at post offices or ATMs in the LINK network. This means the new savings account will be cheaper to run compared to the Ordinary Account and the savings will be passed onto the customer in the form of better interest rates.

The new savings account will be available on 29 January 2004 and new Ordinary Accounts will not be available after 28 January 2004. In order to give existing Ordinary Account customers plenty of time to consider what to do with their savings, they will be able to continue using their account in the normal way until 31 July 2004. After that date, no further deposits can be made and any withdrawal will have to be for the full balance to close the account. In the meantime, National Savings and Investments will be writing to Ordinary Account customers explaining their options, including information about the new account and a simple transfer form for those wishing to transfer their savings into the new account.

Public Expenditure

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last conducted a needs-based review of public expenditure levels in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland. [149454]

Mr. Boateng: Public expenditure of UK Government Departments has been reviewed in each spending review. The funding for the Devolved Administrations has been determined using the Barnett formula. Details were published in the Statement of Funding Policy in July 2002.

Spirits (Duty)

Mr. Alan Reid: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful prosecutions there were for evading duty on spirits in the most recent year for which figures are available. [147324]

John Healey *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* In 2002–03, there were 24 prosecutions for evading duty on spirits. Of these, 21 were successful and three were unsuccessful.

Additionally, 62 prosecutions were brought for cases involving the evasion of duty on mixed excise goods, some of which may have included spirits.

Figures for the current and future years will be reported on an annual basis by HM Customs and Excise in their Annual Report.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people employed in his Department have claimed statutory sick pay for *(a)* less than one week, *(b)* one to three weeks, *(c)* four to six weeks, *(d)* seven to 12 weeks, *(e)* 13 to 20 weeks and *(f)* 21 to 28 weeks in each year since 1997. [148622]

Ruth Kelly: The information is not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

The Treasury, Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise pay full pay for six months and a further six months at half pay for staff who are absent due to sickness. SSP is paid only when employees are not receiving full pay. SSP is paid for up to 28 weeks.

There are very few payments of SSP made due to the sick absence scheme we operate.

TRANSPORT

Flying (Health)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the implications for human health of travelling in passenger aircraft at altitudes in excess of 30,000 feet. [148588]

Mr. McNulty: Although scheduled passenger aircraft routinely fly at altitudes of between 30,000 and 37,000 feet, the cabin is pressurised to the equivalent of between 6,000 and 8,000 feet to compensate for the reduction in atmospheric pressure. The Government are actively examining the effects of air travel on the health of passengers, notably in relation to the incidence of deep vein thrombosis and cabin air quality. In conjunction with the Civil Aviation Authority and the National Radiological Protection Board, the Department has also issued advice on limiting airline crew's exposure to cosmic radiation in accordance with Article 42 of Council Directive 96/29/Euratom.

Shipping (Accidents)

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* injuries and *(b)* fatalities there were caused by accidents involving personal transfer baskets used in British waters in each year since 1997. [148501]

Mr. Jamieson: The Marine Accident Investigation Branch of DfT has no record of injuries caused by accidents involving transfer baskets used in British waters since 1997.

Air Transport

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what advice he received from the National Air Traffic Service on the feasibility of the proposals

contained in the White Paper on "The Future of Air Transport" *(a)* prior to publication of the White Paper and *(b)* subsequently; [149044]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the proposals in the White Paper on "The Future of Air Transport" on the design of UK airspace; [149047]

(3) what discussions his Department has held with the National Air Traffic Service on the impact of increased airport capacity at *(a)* Heathrow and *(b)* Stansted on the design of London Terminal Area airspace; [149048]

(4) what simulations have been undertaken by the National Air Traffic Service of the impact of increased airport capacity in the South East on the design of London Terminal Area airspace; [149049]

(5) what assessment he has made of how long it will take the National Air Traffic Service (NATS) to *(a)* design and *(b)* implement changes necessary to the London Terminal Area airspace as a result of the proposed increases in airport capacity in the South East; and when NATS expects to begin this work. [149050]

Mr. Darling: The studies that preceded "The Future of Air Transport" included a high-level assessment of airspace issues by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the body responsible for the planning and regulation of UK airspace, and National Air Traffic Services (NATS). This work concluded that the necessary airspace capacity could, in broad terms, be provided safely through the redesign of airspace and the introduction of enhanced air traffic techniques and systems. Copies of the relevant report have been placed in the House Libraries. Both organisations also responded to the consultation that preceded the White Paper. In their response, NATS supported the need for new runways in the South East and expressed a preference for development at existing airports.

Paragraphs 12.25–12.27 of "The Future of Air Transport" set out the Government's expectation that the CAA will make early progress in bringing forward a programme of work, involving other key bodies including NATS, for the redesign of airspace to accommodate forecast growth in air traffic.

Concessionary Fares

Mr. Grogan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much government grant per capita was allocated for concessionary fares on public transport in 2003–04 in *(a)* West Yorkshire, *(b)* South Yorkshire and *(c)* North Yorkshire. [149386]

Mr. McNulty: Government provision for existing concessionary travel schemes is included in the general grant for local authorities. This is distributed using formula spending shares and it is not possible to provide an allocation for each authority. It is for local authorities to decide their spending priorities in the light of their responsibilities and the wishes of their electorate.

Spend on a per capita basis in 2002–03 by each of the three authorities on concessionary fare reimbursement was approximately as follows:

West Yorkshire—£11.45 per head

South Yorkshire—£9.85 per head

North Yorkshire (on an aggregate of its seven district councils)—£2.33 per head.

In North Yorkshire the concessionary fare schemes were funded by district councils, not the county.

West Yorkshire PTE's concessionary fares scheme provides for a flat fare on buses and rail services for older and disabled people. Schoolchildren and students can also travel at a reduced fare. South Yorkshire PTE's scheme provides for flat fares on local bus, tram and train services for older and disabled people, schoolchildren and students. In North Yorkshire the seven district councils all provide a half fare scheme on bus services for older and disabled people only, with some providing concessionary travel on other modes.

Driving Tests

Mr. Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the introduction of compulsory hazard perception tests for existing approved driving instructors; and if he will make a statement. [145334]

Mr. Jamieson: We have received representations from a wide variety of sources since our decision to add moving-image Hazard Perception Testing (HPT) to the supervision of existing Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) was announced in December.

HPT has been part of the qualification process for learner drivers, car, lorry and bus drivers, motorcyclists and prospective ADIs since November 2002. Our announcement followed consultation exercises in December 2001 on HPT for learner drivers and riders and prospective ADIs, and in April 2003 for existing ADIs. On both occasions, instructor interests mainly favoured introduction for drivers and prospective ADIs, but not for existing ADIs. Other interests, such as road safety bodies and the police, mainly favoured the proposals, including for existing ADIs.

The ADI registration scheme already requires instructors to have their competence periodically re-assessed. We now plan to use modern technology to assess standards objectively against the same benchmark—regardless of when ADIs were registered. This should ensure that ADIs are familiar with the nature of the tests faced by trainees.

Insurance Discs

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the merits of introduction of insurance discs. [148221]

Dr. Howells: The Government have commissioned an independent review, by Professor David Greenaway, of the UK motor insurance system with a particular focus on uninsured driving. The review will include an assessment of the merits of the introduction of insurance discs. Professor David Greenaway is expected to report in April and we will study carefully his recommendations.

M6

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money will be spent on the M6 *(a)* maintenance and *(b)* upgrading in (i) Lancashire, (ii) Cheshire and (iii) Staffordshire in each of the next five years; and how many miles of the M6 motorway will be affected in each of the counties. [148222]

Dr. Howells: Maintenance programmes are established on an annual basis, based upon an assessment of network condition and availability of funds.

Subject to the availability of funds, the Highways Agency plans to invest in a Motorway Incident Detection Automatic Signalling System (MIDAS), which includes upgrading the current Variable Message Signs, on the Lancashire section of the M6.

Traffic Management Bill

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many uniformed patrols will be set up by the Highways Agency under the Traffic Management Bill; what their annual cost will be; and how many new posts will be created. [145825]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 7 January 2004]:* The number of uniformed patrols (a liveried vehicle and uniformed Traffic Officers) will depend on day-to-day operational requirements and is currently envisaged to be about 100 when fully phased in on motorways. The annual cost is about £40 million. It is currently envisaged that the number of new posts created will be about 1,200 Traffic Officers.

The Highways Agency and Association of Chief Police Officers "Roles and Responsibilities Report" identified plans that could free up the equivalent of about 540 full-time equivalent police officers. Based on figures from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary of 6,540 designated roads police in 2001–02, the report estimated that a transfer of non-core police activities to the Highways Agency enabled approximately 8½ per cent. of police time to work on other key tasks. Resources will be freed up over a period of about three years as Highways Agency Traffic Officers are phased in across all motorways and some key trunk roads.

Transport Investment

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much investment there was in transport in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley in each of the last five years. [148220]

Dr. Howells: Lancashire has received:

Year	*£ million*
2000–01	10.896
2001–02	27.83
2002–03	29.704
2003–04	25.388
2004–05	29.202

The figure requested for Chorley cannot be disaggregated from the Lancashire totals identified above. However Chorley has benefited considerably from these monies; an example of which is the £2.873 million Chorley Bus Interchange completed in March 2003, which has brought attractive and safe conditions to bus travel in Chorley.

Urban Bus Challenge

Paul Farrelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which local authorities in the West Midlands made bids in the Urban Bus Challenge competition. [149430]

Mr. McNulty: The following local authorities in the West Midlands made bids in the 2003 Urban Bus Challenge competition.

Authority	*Number of bids*
Staffordshire County Council	1
Stoke-on-Trent Council	2
Telford and Wrekin Council	1
Warwickshire County Council	2
West Midlands PTA	7
Worcestershire County Council	1

DEFENCE

Army Regiment Strengths

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the strength against requirement is of each regiment of the British Army. [147960]

Mr. Ingram: The information is not held centrally in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, details on the current trained Regular Army manning state by Arms and Service as at 1 December 2003 are shown in the table.

Arms/Service	*Requirement*	*Strength*
Household Cavalry /Royal Armoured Corps	5,975	5,885
Royal Artillery	8,330	7,815
Royal Engineers	9,160	8,790
Royal Signals	8,635	8,580
Infantry	26,185	25,830
Army Air Corps	2,105	1,820
Royal Army Chaplains Department	165	145
Royal Logistics Corps	16,205	15,200
Royal Army Medical Corps	2,920	2,645
Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	10,370	9,635
Adjutant General Corps (Provost)	2,075	2,055
AGC (Staff Personnel Support)	4,645	4,615
AGC (Education and Training Corps)	315	320
AGC (Army Legal Service)	95	90
Royal Army Veterinary Corps	190	175
Small Arms School Corps	145	150
Royal Army Dental Corps	420	405
Intelligence Corps	1,410	1,335
Army Physical Training Corps	455	425
General List	—	—
Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps	1,035	800
Corps of Army Musicians	1,155	1,025

— = zero or rounded to zero.

Notes:

1. The trained requirement for individual Arms and Service Directors is derived from the Regular Army strength requirement (excluding Gurkhas and FTRS), which is published in DASA's Tri-Service Monthly Publication (TSP) 3.
2. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.

Base Closures

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which *(a)* Army, *(b)* RAF and *(c)* Royal Navy bases he proposes to close. [148459]

Mr. Caplin: The MOD keeps the size and location of its bases under constant review. In the estate strategy, "In Trust and On Trust" the Department set out its intention to define its mainland Great Britain sites as core' or 'non-core'. Initial classification work was conducted last year. Building on this the Department is now undertaking further work to identify where estate rationalisation may be possible. This work is consistent with the Department's contribution to the Government's Independent Review of Public Sector Rationalisation—the Lyons review. Any specific proposals arising from these studies will be subjected to full consultation in due course.

Call-out Notices

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many compulsory call-out notices have been issued in each of the last three years; and how many individuals were mobilised in each of those years. [R] [147136]

Mr. Caplin: In 2003, over 13,500 call-out notices were issued. However, it should be noted that some individuals received more than one call-out notice to report for a particular operation. The number of call-out notices issued in 2001 and 2002 is not centrally held and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The number of reservists who were mobilised in the last three years is as follows:

	Number
2001	920
2002	1,720
2003	9,550

These figures include Volunteer Reserves, Regular Reserves and Sponsored Reserves.

Communications

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what shortcomings were identified in the Oscar strategic communications system procured for use during Operation TELIC; and how much was spent on the system. [147276]

Mr. Ingram: The Operations and Strategic Communications Architecture (OSCA) system was procured at short notice to enhance our strategic communications capability. The lack of scope to engineer the solution full and the requirement to integrate OSCA into the existing UK military communications infrastructure caused some difficulties. These difficulties did not significantly affect the operational outcome.

Some £13 million was spent on acquiring the hardware and costs of some £20 million have been incurred in running the system up to December 2003.

Death-in-service Benefit

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the proposed increase in death-in-service benefit from one and a half to four times salary will be payable to Service personnel who opt to remain within the existing Armed Forces Pension Scheme. [148063]

Mr. Caplin: No, but those who wish to have that benefit will be able to transfer to the new scheme, which is entirely a matter of choice for each individual member of the armed forces.

Dog Patrols

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dog patrols were made on *(a)* Army bases and *(b)* RAF stations in the United Kingdom on (i) 1 January 1997 and (ii) 1 January 2003. [148397]

Mr. Caplin: The information is not recorded as there is no requirement to do so. Security at MOD establishments is kept under constant review and dog patrol duties, which form an important element of security procedures at MOD establishments, are no exception.

Gulf Campaign Medal

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British servicemen and women were awarded the Gulf Campaign Medal for Operation Desert Storm in 1990–91, broken down by armed service. [148320]

Mr. Caplin: Operation Desert Storm was the name given to the American operations during the Gulf War of 1990–91. The term used to describe the British operations was Operation Granby. The Gulf Medal 1990–91 was either awarded on its own, or together with one of two clasps which were attached to the medal ribbon and acknowledged specific periods of operational service. The details were published in Command Paper 1627 which the then Prime Minister presented to Parliament by Command of Her Majesty The Queen, in August 1991. A copy was placed in the Library of the House.

As far as can ascertained from records held by the Ministry of Defence's four single service medal offices, a total of 59,687 medals with and without clasps were issued to Service personnel, including those people recalled to the Armed Forces from the Reserves for service during the conflict. The distribution of these medals can be broken down as follows:

Service	*Medal only*	*Medal with clasp 2 August 1990*	*Medal with clasp 16 January–28 February 1991*	*Total*
Royal Navy	2,409	Nil	3,942	6,351
Royal Marines	130	Nil	407	537
Army	4,093	46	34,692	38,831
Royal Air Force	5,673	20	8,275	13,968
Total	12,305	66	47,316	59,687

In addition, medals with and without clasps, were awarded to members of various civilian organisations and to foreign nationals who served with British Forces in the Middle East.

Gulf War Veterans

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gulf War veterans of 1990 were still serving in the armed forces in 2003. [148269]

Mr. Caplin: Approximately 16,600 of the 53,464 United Kingdom armed forces personnel who served in the Gulf conflict of 1990–91 were still in Service on 1 January 2003.

Iraq

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his policy is on the extra-territorial applicability of the European Convention on Human Rights in territories under the military occupation of United Kingdom forces. [141685]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the total cost is since September 2002 of the deployment of United Kingdom forces in Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [148298]

Mr. Ingram: Outturn information for 2002–03 on the cost of operations in Iraq which have been subject to National Audit Office (NAO) audit, have been published as part of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts. Operating Costs for 2002–03 for operations in Iraq total £629.531 million. Expenditure on capital equipment amounts to £217.680 million. The grand total is, therefore, £847.211 million.

For 2003–04, funding voted at Winter Supplementary Estimates amounted to £1.2 billion and covered the cost of peacekeeping and associated Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs). The Ministry of Defence will seek a further £300 million at Spring Supplementary Estimates to cover primarily the cost of the Recuperation of the Department's operational capability. Thus, the total sought in 2003–04 will be £1.5 billion.

It is too early to say what costs might be incurred after 2003–04.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 4 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 127W, on Iraq, what the latest total is of deaths in British custody; what the status of investigations into them is; and if he will make a statement. [148435]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer on 19 January 2004]*: There have been a total of 6 deaths of Iraqis in UK custody in Iraq. All are, or have been, the subject of investigations by the Royal Military Police Special Investigations Branch. The investigation into the death of Radhi Nama concluded that he died of natural causes. The other five investigations are continuing and it would therefore be inappropriate to comment further until they are complete.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 30W, on Iraq, how many of the armoured Land Rovers operating in Iraq have been used in field operations. [148550]

Mr. Ingram: All of them.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 5 January 2003, *Official Report*, column 30W, on Iraq, how many of the Gazelle and Puma helicopters operating in Iraq have been used in field operations. [148585]

Mr. Ingram: All of them.

Manning Control

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to compensate soldiers who were subject to manning control where it is proved that the wrong procedures were applied to their discharge; [147890]

(2) what plans he has *(a)* to compensate and *(b)* to re-instate soldiers who were subject to manning control and then engaged on S-Type contracts where it is proved that the wrong procedures were applied to their discharge. [147891]

Mr. Caplin: There is no evidence to suggest that incorrect procedures have been applied to soldiers who have been discharged as a result of manning control, and the issue of compensation has therefore not arisen. Should any such cases come to light, the onus would be on the individual to make a claim against the Ministry of Defence. Anyone believing they have been wrongly discharged from the Army is entitled to redress of complaint which, if successful, could lead to reinstatement.

Overseas Deployments

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries in which United Kingdom troops are stationed, giving numbers in each case. [147400]

Mr. Ingram: Approximate numbers of British troops stationed permanently overseas are:

	Number
Germany	22,900
Cyprus	2,800
Falkland Islands	1,200
Brunei	1,100
Gibraltar	780
Canada	210
Diego Garcia	40
Belize	30
Kenya	10

In addition, some 650 Service personnel are posted overseas on representational duties in British Embassies and High Commissions, or on Loan or Secondment in support of the Government's Defence Diplomacy objectives.

Reservists

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985 in ensuring that *(a)* reservists' jobs are safeguarded, *(b)* adequate compensation is payable when they are not, *(c)* the procedure to be

followed is as simple as possible and *(d)* employers do not misuse economic restructuring to minimise compensation. [146183]

Mr. Caplin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 454W.

However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 11 December 2003 that the Ministry of Defence will be examining the effectiveness of the 1985 Act as part of the White Paper process.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many reservists serve as *(a)* full-time reservists with full commitment contracts, *(b)* full-time reservists with limited commitment contracts, *(c)* full-time reservists with home commitment contracts and *(d)* volunteer reservists. [148668]

Mr. Caplin: I refer the hon. Member to Tri-Service Publication (TSP) 3:UK Armed Forces Strengths and Requirements, and UK Defence Statistics (UKDS) 2003. TSP 3 shows strength figures of full-time reservists broken down by commitment type. Table 2.13 of UKDS shows the strength of the Volunteer reserves as at 1 April each year.

These are both available in the House of Commons Library; TSP 3 and UKDS are updated on a monthly and yearly basis, respectively. TSP 3 for 1 November 2003 was published on 10 December 2003. The 1 December 2003 issue is due for publication shortly.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support his Department gives to a reservist prevented from returning to his previous employment; and if he will make a statement. [146180]

Mr. Caplin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 454W. The Ministry of Defence's Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE) campaign team provides a helpline and a website which gives additional information and advice.

Service Children's Education

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to implement recommendation 8.6 of the Quinquennial Review of Service Children Education published in May 2003. [147139]

Mr. Caplin: Although the Quinquennial Review Report into the Service Children's Education Agency was dated May 2003, the review process was not completed until 2 December 2003, at which point the outcome was reported to the House. No steps have therefore yet been taken to implement recommendation 8.6, but work on this is now in progress.

Union Flag

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the Government's policy is on the display of the Union Flag on Army recruitment and careers literature in *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [149092]

Mr. Caplin: All Army recruitment literature is produced for use throughout the United Kingdom, and as such, bears images of the Union Flag. However, local press advertising in Northern Ireland uses the Army crossed sword/crown logo instead of the Union Flag but television advertising retains the use of the Flag.

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the Army's policy is on the display of the Union Flag *(a)* at its bases in Northern Ireland, *(b)* at Palace Barracks in Holywood, County Down and *(c)* within the recruitment office at Palace Barracks. [149093]

Mr. Ingram: The Army's policy on the flying of the Union Flag within Northern Ireland is that it should be flown at flag stations designated in Queen's Regulations or those authorised by the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland. One of the flag stations designated in Queen's Regulations is Palace Barracks, Holywood. The Armed Forces Careers Office within Palace Barracks, as a recruitment office for all three Services, flies the three Service Flags outside their office.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of relocation of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146860]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146876]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146902]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible relocation of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146932]

Mr. Charles Clarke: Sir Michael Lyon's Independent Review of Public Sector Relocation was established by the Chancellor and Deputy Prime Minister to examine the scope for relocating public sector activity, to improve the delivery and efficiency of public services and to benefit regional economies.

Sir Michael's review will be informed by research from King Sturge on suitable alternative locations, and Experian Business Strategies on lessons from previous relocations, and the economic impact of relocation. Summaries of this research will be available shortly on the Treasury website.

Sir Michael's final report will be published in March 2004 and we will develop relocation proposals in light of his findings.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147299]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 516–17W.

Higher Education Funding

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the value of fee repayments by graduates arising from his proposals for variable top-up fees, in each year from 2008 to 2020. [149387]

Alan Johnson: The value of fee repayments will depend on the number of students that decide to defer payment of their fees and take out a fee loan; on the levels of fees that institutions decide to charge; and on the earnings of the graduate population overtime. It is not possible to predict these numbers with certainty and therefore it would not be meaningful to estimate the value of fee repayments year-by-year, given the uncertainties above.

Estimates of the cost of fee loans using a variety of different scenarios are contained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment published on 8 January alongside the HE Bill. Copies of the Regulatory Impact Assessment were placed in the Library of the House; it is also available on the Department for Education and Skills website.

Leak Inquiries

Mr. Lilley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list occasions on which his Department has conducted an inquiry into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and if he will list the occasions on which the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [146940]

Mr. Stephen Twigg *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Since 1997 my department has investigated 23 suspected leaks.

In line with exemptions 1(a) and 7(b) set out in Part II of the "Code of Practice on Access to Government Information", it has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

Modern Language Teachers

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what progress is being made on the production of specialised resources for the teaching of modern languages in primary schools; [148377]

(2) what percentage of teaching time he aims to allocate to foreign languages in primary schools by 2010; [148378]

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress since November 2002 of Government plans to upgrade foreign languages in primary schools. [148379]

Mr. Stephen Twigg: There has been considerable progress on the development of language learning in primary schools since November 2002, underpinned by the launch in December 2002 of the Department's National Languages Strategy for England. Implementation of the Strategy is being driven by Dr. Lid King, the National Director for Languages.

The Strategy recognises the importance of developing a workforce and resources to support successful implementation of primary language learning, and much of our work to date has focused on these areas. In developing a school workforce, we are building up a cadre of specialist teachers and non-teacher specialists to support primary language learning. 499 places have been filled this year for Primary Initial Teacher Training with a specialism in French, German or Spanish. 119 primary MFL Advanced Skills Teachers are now in place, and we have allocated 50 primary MFL places to the Graduate Teacher Programme. We are working with the TTA to pilot a CPD course for existing primary teachers to develop language skills and MFL pedagogy. The TTA has also begun the process of approving training providers for Higher Level Teaching Assistants, and we are working with the British Council to extend the foreign language assistants programme into primary schools.

On resources, we are working with a range of partners to develop a framework for language learning at Key Stage 2, to be published in autumn 2005. It is intended as a shared national reference point for all those involved in teaching modern foreign languages in primary schools. It will offer guidance on key considerations such as pedagogy, cross-curricular links, curriculum delivery models and transition at age 11. The framework will supplement existing non-statutory guidance for modern foreign languages at Key Stage 2, which contains a programme of study and attainment targets for listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In addition, we are developing schemes of work with QCA in Spanish and German to mirror those that already exist in French. The Spanish scheme of work will also be developed into a digital online resource. The Department has also funded the establishment of NACELL—the National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning—which provides access to appropriate information, including resources and has an extensively used website for language teachers.

In addition to workforce and resource development, in September 2003 the Department launched MFL pathfinders in 19 LEAs to explore how language learning can best be introduced at Key Stage 2. The findings from those pathfinders will provide practical guidance and help to inform teachers, schools and LEAs of good practice. We are also developing the National Recognition Scheme, as outlined in the Strategy, and are currently trialling the scheme in a range of settings, including primary schools.

On time allocation, the Department does not specify how much time should be allocated to deliver modern foreign languages in primary schools, or indeed to any other subject. It is for head teachers to decide how they introduce language learning at Key Stage 2 and the amount and frequency of language teaching time. The Department will, however, be issuing guidance and good practice to help inform such decisions.

Student Finance

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his statement of 8 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 418, on higher education (student support), whether the student loan repayment to be written off after 25 years applies to all money owed to the Student Loans Company. [148267]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Under the student support proposals announced by my right hon. Friend on 8 January, the Government intend to write-off outstanding student loan balances 25 years after graduates enter liability to repay their loans, which is from the April after graduation. This policy will apply to those entering HE from 2006 and graduating in 2009 and cover both maintenance and fee loans.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the age limit is on eligibility for student loans; and how he proposes to change that in the event of a repayment period capped at 25 years. [149636]

Alan Johnson: The age limit is 50 for eligible students meeting the residence requirements. Those aged 50 to 54 at the start of their course can also apply for a student loan provided that they plan to return to work after finishing their course. We have no plans to change the age limits.

We already cancel loans when a borrower reaches the age of 65. We also intend to put a 25 year cap on the loan repayment period, so that outstanding loan amounts are written off after 25 years (or age 65, whichever is the earlier).

Student Places

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many additional student places will be made available in higher education in *(a)* 2006 and *(b)* each year to 2020 under (i) the present arrangements and (ii) his proposals on top-up fees. [148710]

Alan Johnson: The planned number of student places is set during spending reviews in the light of the Government's target of increasing participation in higher education towards 50 per cent. of those aged 18 to 30 by the end of the decade. Planned student numbers for 2005–06 to 2007–08 will be set as part of the current spending review, which will conclude next summer. However, the additional funds that we estimate will be raised by higher education institutions from charging variable fees are equivalent to the resources that would be required for around 135,000 students.

CABINET OFFICE

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what percentage of staff employed within the Office are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145769]

Mr. Alexander: The following Table shows the number and percentage of staff in departments and agencies aged 55 and over at 1 April 2003. The figures are based on the headcount of permanent civil servants.

Department	Age 55 +	Others	Total	Per cent. 55 +
Cabinet Office	190	1,780	1,970	9.6
COI	30	330	360	8.1
Sec. & Intelligence Services	490	4,200	4,690	10.4
DCMS	50	640	690	7.5
MOD	18,550	74,900	93,450	19.8
ODPM	350	2,600	2,940	11.9
DfES	470	4,760	5,220	8.9
OFSTED	340	2,310	2,650	12.9
DEFRA	1,410	9,680	11,080	12.7
DoHealth	320	3,260	3,580	9.0
Home Office	1,900	20,520	22,420	8.5
Charity Commission	50	520	580	9.0
HM Prison Service	6,100	38,060	44,160	13.8
DfID	110	1,030	1,140	9.7
Crown Prosecution Service	550	6,890	7,440	7.4
Legal Secretariat	10	30	30	16.7
Treasury Solicitors	40	500	540	7.8
CPSI	10	40	40	11.9
DCA	2,210	10,310	12,530	17.7
HM Land Registry	1,100	7,840	8,940	12.3
Public Record Office	70	450	520	13.9
Trade and Industry	1,280	8,970	10,240	12.5
ACAS	150	750	900	16.8
ECGD	50	340	390	12.7
Office of Fair Trading	80	330	410	20.1
OFGEM	10	260	270	2.9
DTLR	2,900	12,890	15,790	18.4
Health & Safety Executive	580	3,680	4,260	13.6
OFWAT	10	230	240	5.4
OS	140	1,640	1,780	7.6
DfT	250	1,700	1,940	12.7
HM Treasury	60	980	1,040	5.4
Customs & Excise	2,490	20,470	22,950	10.8
GAD	10	90	100	10.3
Inland Revenue	8,580	74,260	82,840	10.4
DNS	10	100	110	10.5
ONS	340	3,130	3,470	9.8
Royal Mint	90	720	810	10.6
DWP	11,860	12,2410	134,270	8.8
Northern Ireland Office	320	160	190	17.7
Privy Council Office	[1]—	30	30	8.8
Scottish Executive	1,190	10,920	12,110	9.8
Crown Office & PFS	80	1,380	1,450	5.4
General Register Office (Scotland)	40	180	220	17.7
National Archive for Scotland	20	130	150	12.6
Office SOS for Scotland	10	90	100	11.7
Registers of Scotland	90	1,280	1,370	6.8
National Assembly of Wales	430	3,290	3,720	11.6
OHMCI	10	80	90	14.6
Wales Office	10	40	50	18.8

[1] Numbers and percentages less than 5.

The following Table shows the number and percentage of recruits to departments and agencies over the period 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003 who are aged 55 years and over. Figures are based on the headcount of Permanent civil servants.

Department	Age 55 +	Others	Total	Percentage of recruits aged 55 +
Cabinet Office	10	190	200	7.0
Parliamentary Counsel Office	[1]—	10	10	[1]—
COI	[1]—	80	80	[1]—
Sec & Intelligence Services	10	220	230	6.1
DCMS	[1]—	50	60	[1]—
MOD	1,330	6,360	7,690	17.3
ODPM	50	310	350	12.8
DfES	30	320	340	7.8
OFSTED	60	400	450	12.6
DEFRA	60	620	680	9.1
DoH	60	510	570	10.9
Home Office	310	3,250	3,560	8.7
Charity Commission	[1]—	70	70	[1]—

Department	Age 55 +	Others	Total	Percentage of recruits aged 55 +
HM Prison Service	480	3,790	4,270	11.2
DfID	[1]—	30	30	[1]—
Crown Prosecution Service	60	720	780	7.4
Legal Secretariat	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Treasury Solicitors Department	[1]—	90	90	[1]—
Lord Chancellors Department.	220	1,390	1,610	13.9
HM Land Registry	60	520	580	9.5
Public Record Office	10	90	100	9.5
Department. of Trade and Industry	60	640	690	8.4
ACAS	[1]—	40	40	[1]—
ECGD	[1]—	50	60	[1]—
OFGEM	[1]—	50	50	[1]—
DTLR	160	1,110	1,270	12.8
Health & Safety Executive	10	280	300	4.1
OFWAT	0	50	50	0.0
OS	10	70	80	9.3
HM Treasury	[1]—	80	80	[1]—
Customs & Excise	90	1,150	1,240	7.3
GAD	[1]—	10	10	[1]—
Inland Revenue	1,320	12,100	13,420	9.8
DNS	[1]—	20	30	[1]—
ONS	20	350	370	5.7
Royal Mint	[1]—	20	30	[1]—
DWP	1,710	12,340	14,050	12.2
Northern Ireland Office	[1]—	20	20	[1]—
Privy Council Office	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Scottish Executive	90	960	1,040	8.2
Crown Office & PFS	20	220	240	8.6
General Register Office (Scotland)	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
National Archive for Scotland	[1]—	10	10	[1]—
Office SOS for Scotland	0	10	10	0.0
Registers of Scotland	10	120	140	10.1
National Assembly Wales	110	350	460	24.0
OHMCI	[1]—	10	10	[1]—
Wales Office	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

[1] Numbers and percentages less than 5.

Source:

Mandate The data from Mandate incorporate information on almost 98 per cent. of civil servants.

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Rounding may lead to inconsistencies between the sum of individual cells and the totals are calculated from the unrounded numbers.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

National Lottery

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many applications for lottery grant funding have been received in the last year from applicants in the Billericay constituency; what the total value was of these applications; how many were successful; what the total value of grants was; how many applications were received in the United Kingdom; what the total value was of these applications; how many applications were successful; and what the total value of grants was. [149381]

Estelle Morris: The Department does not collect information concerning the number and value of applications for lottery funding received by the distributing bodies.

In the last full financial year (2002–03), 22 awards worth a total of £495,535 have been granted in the constituency of Billericay.

In the same period across the UK, over £1.6 billion was awarded to 26,841 awards.

These numbers are derived from the Department's database of lottery awards, which is based on information supplied by the distributing bodies.

Racehorses

Mr. Cawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what provisions are included in the Horserace Betting and Olympic Lottery Bill for *(a)* veterinary care at racecourses, *(b)* support for the re-housing of retired racehorses, *(c)* support for the improvement of the breeds of horses and *(d)* support for veterinary science and education. [148777]

Mr. Caborn: Clause 16(6)b of the Bill provides that Levy Board assets may be transferred to a third party only where the Secretary of State is satisfied that they would be used for one of the following purposes: the improvement of breeds of horses; the advancement or encouragement of veterinary science or veterinary education; the improvement of horse racing.

Regional Television

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what role Ofcom has in maintaining levels of regional television broadcasting output in *(a)* the East Midlands and *(b)* other regions. [148670]

Estelle Morris: Under the Communications Act 2003 all public service broadcasters will have to agree targets with Ofcom for regional programming and/or regional production.

Every Channel 3 licensee will agree targets with Ofcom for regional production and investment in programme-making for Channel 3.

Within these targets, regional Channel 3 services will also have requirements for programme production and investment in programme-making for Channel 3 regional programmes on a regional or national Channel 3 service, and local programmes on any local Channel 3 service. These regional programmes should be of high quality and a sufficient proportion must be shown at or around peak time.

Ofcom will also agree targets with Channel 4 and Channel 5 for programme production and investment in the regions.

Obligations similar to those for Channel 3 will be applied by Ofcom to the BBC by way of the BBC Agreement.

Mr. Laxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how levels of regional television output have changed since the adoption of the Charter for the nations and the regions in *(a)* the East Midlands and *(b)* other regions. [148675]

Estelle Morris: The Charter for Broadcasting in the Nations and Regions is an agreement between the ITV companies and the ITC setting out a broad range of measures designed to provide a common benchmark for regional activity. It was adopted in May 2002. The weekly average regional hours for the ITV regions, provided by Ofcom, are shown in the following table. Carlton Central is the licensee for the East Midlands area.

Regional hours

Hours, minutes

	Broadcast hours, weekly averages		
	[1]*2001*	[1]*2002*	[1,2]*2003*
Anglia	9:41	9:08	9:12
Border	5:58	5:57	6:45
Carlton	8:59	7:43	6:15
Carlton Central	8:29	8:08	9:01
Channel	5:33	5:46	5:44
Grampian	7:30	7:43	7:30
Granada	9:15	9:09	9:16
HTV Wales	10:53	10:33	10:11
HTV West	10:50	9:45	8:56
LWT	3:33	3:20	2:42
Meridian	10:44	9:55	9:13
STV	14:51	13:21	12:19
Tyne Tees	10:24	9:35	9:24
UTV	11:07	10:44	10:13
Carlton Westcountry	10:53	10:08	8:55
Yorkshire	9:21	8:54	9:17

[1] Calendar years

[2] January to September 2003, final figures for 2003 are not yet available.

Note:

These figures exclude repeats and all programmes transmitted after 12.30am to allow comparison.

Sunset Clauses

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on her policy on the use of sunset clauses in legislation; and which Acts containing such clauses relevant to her Department were passed in each year since 1997. [149327]

Mr. Caborn: None of the Bills the Department has introduced since 1997 have contained sunset clauses. Decisions on the future use of such clauses will be made on a case by case basis and will be communicated to the House in the usual way.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Burma (Displaced People)

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent estimate he has made of the number of displaced Burmese people; and how many of them are in refugee camps. [148120]

Hilary Benn: DFID uses estimates of displaced Burmese people made by UN agencies. According to the latest figures obtained from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, there are 19,500 Burmese in refugee camps in Bangladesh and 116,711 in refugee camps in Thailand. There are no accurate figures for the number of displaced Burmese people in other locations.

Burundi

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many people have been prosecuted for breaches of human rights in Burundi since January 1994. [148117]

Hilary Benn: As a result of political instability, widespread insecurity and fighting between rebel groups and the Government of Burundi army since 1993,there has been internal displacement of over 281,000 people with over 800,000 refugees living in neighbouring countries, mainly in Tanzania. The majority of the remaining population in the country continued to be victims of human rights violations caused by the rebels or undisciplined regular soldiers. Torture, cruelty and inhuman degradation and punishment were everyday burdens for the ordinary citizen who could not get effective recourse because of a poor justice system. About 8,300 Burundians are in prison but only 44 per cent. have been sentenced.

It remains difficult to get a clear distinction between ordinary crimes and violations of human rights. We assume that most prisoners' offences fall into the category of human rights violations.

515 prisoners are on death row because of different atrocities e.g. murder, assassination, homicide, cannibalism, attempt to destabilise national security etc.

Six people (including a headmaster) were executed in July 1997 for their direct involvement in crimes on ethnic grounds.

About 700 people were sentenced to life imprisonment.

There are currently about 400 soldiers accused of violating fundamental rights.

Two civil servants (members of the judicial police) were prosecuted for violating human rights.

Chad/Cameroon

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions his Department has had with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees regarding Sudanese refugees in Chad. [149163]

Hilary Benn: Since the latest movement of refugees into Chad we have been in regular contact with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Geneva and their field teams in eastern Chad.

Our Humanitarian Adviser will be visiting eastern Chad in two weeks' time to assess the refugee situation there; the visit will be hosted by the UNHCR.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how his Department will respond to the appeal for $11 million by the World Food Organisation for the Sudanese refugees in Chad. [149178]

Hilary Benn: I refer the hon. Member to my response of 19 January 2004 to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (John Barrett), *Official Report*, column 929W.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of Chad's ability to cope with the influx of refugees fleeing war in Sudan and the Central African Republic. [149217]

Hilary Benn: Chad is making efforts to address this situation, but it lacks the resources properly to meet the needs of the refugees: the UN and international NGOs are therefore assisting them in this task.

We appreciate the efforts the Chad Government are making to help bring about a peaceful end to the fighting in Darfur.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what the total financial contribution made by the United Kingdom is for the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project; [148119]

(2) what assessment he has made of the quality of the auditing of the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project. [148118]

Hilary Benn: The UK Government are not providing any direct financing for the Chad/Cameroon Oil Pipeline Project, nor is it directly engaged in other way e.g. provision of technical assistance. Our interest is indirect through the World Bank and the European Investment Bank.

DFID is confident that the World Bank's systems for monitoring and implementing this project are appropriate. In relation to the quality of auditing and fiscal accountability, Bank policy identifies two sets of appropriate auditing standards: the International standards on Auditing published by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the Auditing Standards published by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. Project arrangements provide for regular audits, on the Chad/Cameroon pipeline projects' accounts, plus independent opinions from the International Advisory Group (IAG) and the External Compliance and Monitoring Group (ECMG) who carry out regular independent supervisions of the technical and environmental aspects of the project and from the Inspection Panel who respond to requests from private individuals.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) for what reason the external independent quality assurance and quality control audits relating to the Chad/Cameroon project have been circumvented; [148521]

(2) if he will make a statement on environmental protection measures relating to the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project; [148714]

(3) if he will make a statement on the standard of fiscal accountability and transparency measures since the commissioning of the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project; [148715]

(4) for what reason quality assurance and quality control audits of the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project have not been conducted by the World Bank; [148522]

(5) for what reason internal audits of the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project have not been conducted; [148523]

(6) for what reason bills of quantities in relation to the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project have been approved in the absence of packages for quality assurance and quality control; [148716]

(7) for what reason work on the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project continued without procedures for quality assurance and quality control; [148524]

(8) for what reason the project design change orders on the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project were negotiated and approved without plans for quality assurance and quality control; [148525]

(9) what assessment has been made by international aid agencies of the adequacy of compliance with quality assurance and quality control in relation to the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project; [148526]

(10) for what reason the World Bank has employed contractors who are not fully I.S.O. 9000 series accredited; [148527]

(11) whether project completion certificates for the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project have been approved; [148700]

(12) if he will make a statement on levels of insurance cover relating to the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project; [148713]

(13) for what reason bills of quantities for the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project have been approved without packages for front end engineering design. [148717]

Hilary Benn: DFID is not directly involved in funding or implementing this project. DFID therefore does not have first-hand information on detailed implementation issues concerning quality assurance and control audits, internal audits, quality assurance and quality control, project design change orders, accreditation of contractors, project completion certificates, levels of insurance, fiscal accountability and transparency measures, and bills of quantities.

However, DFID is confident that the World Bank's systems for the monitoring and implementation of this project, and for the investigation of any warranted complaints are appropriate.

Since the project was approved in June 2000, exceptional resources have been allocated by the Bank and the International Finance Corporation, to monitor and support the project's implementation against Internationally agreed standards. This includes the establishment of the Independent Inspection Panel (IIP) and the External Compliance Monitoring Group (ECMG).

In relation to the quality of auditing and fiscal accountability, Bank policy identifies two sets of appropriate auditing standards: the International Standards on Auditing published by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the Auditing Standards published by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. Project arrangements provide for regular audits of the Chad/Cameroon pipeline projects accounts, plus independent opinions from the International Advisory Group (IAG) and the External Compliance and Monitoring Group (ECMG), which carries out regular independent supervisions of the technical and environmental aspects of the project, and from the Inspection Panel which may investigate complaints from people who believe they have been negatively affected by a World Bank project.

The Chad/Cameroon pipeline is subject to a number of monitoring and supervision controls to ensure quality control, application of environmental regulations, design and implementation adhere to International rules and regulations. The Environmental Management Plan (EMP) has strict requirements and specifications, and compliance with these by all parties is spelled out in legally binding agreements. Strong remedies are provided in legal agreements with all parties in case they fail to comply with this obligation. The EMP represents an extensive analysis of the potential environmental and social impacts of the project.

The World Bank are being advised by the ECMG in monitoring the implementation of the Environmental Management Plan, and by an International Advisory Group on broader implementation issues, including those that need to be addressed to achieve the project's developmental objectives. Both the ECMG and IAG make regular site visits. These third party reviews supplement the Bank's own monitoring and supervision of the project which includes site visits, internal reporting and continual discussions with the project sponsors.

The above measures are additional to on-going monitoring by the Consortium and by the Governments of Chad and Cameroon. The Consortium provide quarterly reports which are publicly available.

DFID's interest is as a member of the Executive Board of the World Bank. We do and will continue to take our role on the Executive Board seriously, ensuring that issues identified by the Independent Inspection Panel and External Compliance Monitoring Group are raised, monitored and rectified.

The investigation reports mentioned are available in the public domain and can be found on http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ccproi/index.htm.

Darfur

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans he has to visit Darfur. [148544]

Hilary Benn: I have no plans at present to visit Darfur, but my Humanitarian Adviser intends to do so during his visit to Sudan next week.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the safety of humanitarian aid workers in Darfur. [148545]

Hilary Benn: We have made no specific assessment; however we are aware of threats to humanitarian aid workers as a result of the insecurity there, which will have been exacerbated by the recent conflict.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what expansion of humanitarian access to *(a)* drought-affected people in West and North Darfur and *(b)* vulnerable people in South Darfur has taken place since June 2003; and what contribution has been made by his Department. [148546]

Hilary Benn: Humanitarian access to Darfur is constrained by the continuing conflict between government and rebel forces in the area. We have made representations to both sides that they should allow access from recognised international relief organisations for humanitarian purposes. I myself raised the issue with the Government of Sudan in my most recent visit there.

After June 2003 access improved briefly but, with the breakdown of the ceasefire and resumption of hostilities, access is now limited to the three provincial capitals.

We continue to make efforts to help both sides achieve a peaceful solution to their dispute.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of the level of movement of people and goods in Darfur. [148547]

Hilary Benn: Conflict between government and rebel forces continues in Darfur. The Government controls the main towns, and has varying control in those areas outside. The rebels appear to be able to move freely in most areas, and can close roads between towns. Much movement between towns is by air. This is clearly impacting on the free movement of people and goods in the region.

Of particular concern is the difficulty of gaining access for humanitarian work: United Nations reports indicate that they have access to less than 15 per cent. of the population. Recent reports suggest the situation will worsen. My humanitarian adviser will be travelling to Sudan next week and plans to visit Darfur to assess conditions there.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the United Nations about the planned joint assessment of the humanitarian

situation in Ituri, referred to in his written answer of 22 May 2003 to the hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs. Spelman). [148077]

Hilary Benn: The UN joint assessment mission that took place last May found a critical humanitarian situation, a lack of security due to simmering tension between rival Hendu and Lema militias, and the town of Bunia nearly deserted. Aid groups were only able to assist a small number of people within Bunia, providing medical services to some 9,000 at camps concentrated around the local airport and 6,000 sheltering near the local UN compound. They had virtually no access to populations elsewhere in Ituri. My reply to the hon. Member of 19 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 931W, describes the improvements since that assessment.

We have regular discussions with the UN over the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including Ituri. In addition, a DFID humanitarian adviser visited the DRC in June, and following his assessment we agreed to fund a number of humanitarian activities in Ituri and North Kivu totalling over £1.8 million.

Ethiopia

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what representations he has made to the government of Ethiopia regarding acceptance of the Independent Boundary Commission's proposed boundary between Ethiopia and Eritrea; and if he will make a statement. [147823]

Hilary Benn: Her Majesty's Government keep in touch with the Governments of both Ethiopia and Eritrea at all levels. Towards the end of last year the Prime Minister wrote to both the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the President of Eritrea indicating that the Boundary Commission's decisions are final and binding and that the two parties should engage in dialogue.

I met the Ethiopian ambassador last month, during which we discussed the Peace Process. I also discussed the matter with the Eritrean Foreign Minister during his visit to London at the beginning of December.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister for Africa, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) has had extensive discussions on the Boundary Commission's report including meetings with the President of Eritrea and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia during his recent visit to the two countries.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much development aid has been provided to Ethiopia in each of the last three years. [148278]

Hilary Benn: The total net Official Development Assistance (oda) to Ethiopia over the last three years for which figures are available was as follows. These and all other figures include both development and humanitarian assistance.

	US$ million
2000	693.00
2001	1,157.70
2002	1,306.70

DFID bilateral expenditure in Ethiopia over the same period was:

	£ million
2000	7.2
2001	18.9
2002	27.6

EC total net oda was:

2000: £45.6 million of which DFID's imputed multilateral share was £8.4 million.

2001: £69.4 million of which DFID's imputed multilateral share was £11.5 million.

2002: Figures not yet available.

EU Development Assistance

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts about possible further reforms to EU development assistance. [148516]

Hilary Benn: The EC's reform of its external assistance programmes is coming to an end. The UK Government, together with other member states, have urged the Commission to undertake an in-depth final assessment of this programme to assess its impact but, more importantly, to identify any need for further reforms. We believe further reforms should focus on increasing the level of resources to low income countries and also introducing more consistent use of best development practice throughout all EC programmes. A stronger focus on quality and results and a more rational institutional set up for managing EC aid are also important.

Human Trafficking

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reduction in the trafficking of women in *(a)* Laos, *(b)* Thailand, *(c)* China (Yunnan), *(d)* Cambodia and *(e)* Vietnam has been achieved by the International Labour Organisation. [148580]

Hilary Benn: Because the activity is criminal there are no accurate figures for the numbers of people who are trafficked and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) lacks hard data on progress with reductions. DFID is supporting ILO with a £6 million grant (over five years) to reduce vulnerability to trafficking through low incomes and ignorance of the realities. There is work in all five countries. The indications from China are that trafficking has been reduced or eliminated in communities (numbering around 80,000) participating in the programme. The programme includes work to improve the data.

Iraq

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what humanitarian assistance has been provided to Iraq since April 2003 by *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Austria, *(c)* Bangladesh, *(d)* China, *(e)* Croatia, *(f)* the Czech Republic, *(g)* Denmark, *(h)* Finland, *(i)* France, *(j)* Germany, *(k)* Greece, *(l)* Iran, *(m)* Ireland, *(n)* Italy, *(o)* Japan, *(p)* Korea, *(q)* Kuwait, *(r)* Malaysia, *(s)* the Netherlands, *(t)* New

Zealand, *(u)* Norway, *(v)* Russia, *(w)* Saudi Arabia, *(x)* Spain, *(y)* Sweden, *(z)* Switzerland and *(aa)* the United States of America. [148579]

Hilary Benn: The following table shows contributions announced for humanitarian aid to Iraq since April 2003:

US$ millions

Country	*Contribution*	*Details*
Australia	64.9	UN agencies, ICRC, and NGOs
Austria	1.1	UNICEF
Bangladesh	2	Food assistance
China	N/a	Tents
Croatia	2.8	Blankets, sleeping bags, flour, sugar, water purification disinfectants
Czech Republic	41	UNCHR, WFP, and assistance for refugees, health, and education
Denmark	54	Various
Finland	5.1	ICRC, UN OCHA, UNICEF, WFP
France	10.7	UNICEF, WFP, NGOs
Germany	50	UNCHR, WFP, ICRC
Greece	4.6	UNHCR, ICRC, NGOs
Iran	11	Refugee camps
Ireland	55.3	UN agencies and NGOs
Italy	23	FAO UNICEF, WFP, WHO and IFRC
Japan	212	UN agencies, NGOs, bilateral assistance
Korea	10	UN agencies and Korean NGOs
Kuwait	40	UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC, water and sanitation, health
Malaysia	2.5	Humanitarian assistance
The Netherlands	22	UN Consolidated appeal and ICRC
New Zealand	3.3	UN agencies and NGOs
Norway	56	UN agencies, ICRC, and NGOs
Russia	N/a	500MT of grain
Saudi Arabia	13.3	Medical assistance
Spain	56.7	UN agencies, bilateral refugee assistance, and NGOs
Sweden	38	OCHA, UNICEF, ICRC, IFRC
Switzerland	21.9	ICRC, UNCHR, IOM, IFRC, OCHA
United States of America	623.6	UN agencies, ICRC, IFRC, and NGOs

The countries listed above made the following pledges of reconstruction assistance for 2004–07 at the Madrid Donor's Conference on Iraq last October:

US$ millions

Country	*Pledge*
Australia	46
Austria	5
Bangladesh	—
China	25
Croatia	—
Czech Republic	15
Denmark	27
Finland	6
France	—
Germany	—
Greece	4
Iran	5
Ireland	4
Italy	236
Japan	4,914
Korea	200
Kuwait	500
Malaysia	—
The Netherlands	9
New Zealand	3
Norway	13
Russia	—
Saudi Arabia	500
Spain	220
Sweden	33
Switzerland	—
United States of America	18,649

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what his most recent estimate is of the total cost of post-war reconstruction in Iraq; and how much *(a)* the United States and *(b)* EU member states will contribute to meeting that cost. [148581]

Hilary Benn: Needs assessments prepared by the United Nations and the World Bank, by the Coalition Provisional Authority, and Iraqi administrators, have estimated the reconstruction costs for Iraq to be $55 billion for 2004–07. These plans were presented by Iraqi Ministers at the Madrid Donor's Conference on Iraq in October 2003, and at least $33 billion in grants and soft loans was pledged. This includes pledges from the US of $18.6 billion, and a further $1 billion from EU member states (and acceding countries).

The balance of Iraq's investment requirements should be met from loans, foreign direct investment and Iraqi oil revenues.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how often meetings take place between representatives of his Department and the Coalition Provisional Authority to review progress of CPA projects funded by the Department. [149036]

Hilary Benn: The CPA projects funded by DFID are located in southern Iraq. Members of DFID staff seconded to CPA South are responsible for keeping these projects under review. They report to DFID Headquarters frequently.

Swaziland

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what percentage of his Department's aid to Swaziland went directly into

development projects in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage was allocated to the national government. [149157]

Hilary Benn: In 2002–03 (the last year for which figures are available) DFID spent around £800,000 bilaterally on development assistance to Swaziland. None of this was channelled through the Swazi Government.

Learning Disabilities (Iraq/Afghanistan)

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the number of people suffering from learning disabilities in *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Afghanistan. [148085]

Hilary Benn: In Iraq, UNICEF are taking the lead, with USAID, on assessing the post-war state of the education sector. UNICEF are currently undertaking an education survey to be completed by the end of February. But due to continuing high levels of insecurity for staff of international organisations, and low-capacity in many parts of the Iraqi education system, it currently remains difficult even to mount a simple survey of the number of schools, classes, pupils and teachers—and only in a limited range of geographical areas. We therefore understand that issues such as the number of special needs students will not be included in the present survey. UNICEF do, however, have a strong concern for special needs and will be seeking to encourage the Ministry of Education to take action in this area at the earliest realistic opportunity.

In Afghanistan, surveys show that one in three children suffer from iodine deficiency which can lead to goitre, learning difficulties and, in extreme cases, severe mental impairment. UNICEF have begun a national iodized salt programme and are working through Mother and Child Health Clinics to treat and prevent iron-deficiency anaemia.

Malaria

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the rise in the reported cases of malaria in Africa. [149218]

Hilary Benn: While great progress has been made in reducing malarial mortality in the 1970s and 1980s, in many parts of Africa malarial mortality rates are now increasing. Malaria is Africa's leading cause of child mortality and constitutes 10 per cent. of the continent's overall disease burden. Approximately 3,000 people die from malaria each day in sub-Saharan Africa, most of them children.

A key cause of the rise in malaria deaths is an increase in resistance to antimalarial drugs, and the lack of affordable alternatives. In addition, the capacity of health systems to respond effectively to malaria is often inadequate.

None the less, malaria remains a disease that is preventable, treatable and curable. The Department for International Development (DFID) remains strongly committed to meeting the Millennium Development Goal to halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria by 2015, recognising the importance of malaria, not just in terms of disease burden, but also the potential it has to undermine economic growth and human development.

Since 1998 DFID has provided in excess of £110 million to support malaria control activities globally and at country level. At the global level this includes support to Roll Back Malaria; a $280 million commitment to the Global Fund to Fights AIDS, TB and Malaria (which will fund distribution of insecticide impregnated bednets and appropriate anti-malarial medication); support to the Medical Research Council; support to the Malaria Consortium Resource Centre; and initiatives to help find new low-cost malaria treatments.

DFID also supports malaria control activities at country-level through our bilateral country programmes, either through direct support to the health sector or through general budget support. DFID is committed to supporting national governments and their partners to help ensure that effective drugs and commodities are accessible to the poor. Since 1997 we have committed over £1.5 billion to strengthen health systems to deliver vital drugs and health care treatment.

Maternal Mortality

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what the results have been of his Department's work with the World Health Organisation, UNICEF and UN Population Fund to strengthen global leadership on maternal mortality; [148513]

(2) what the nature is of his Department's collaboration with the World Bank to strengthen global leadership on maternal mortality; [148514]

(3) what performance targets he has set for his Department's involvement in the World Health Organisation Partnership for Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health. [148515]

Hilary Benn: The Department for International Development makes significant contributions to UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and other international and national civil society groups to support their efforts to improve maternal health.

For the period July 2002 to June 2005, DFID has contributed £300 million per year (10.14 per cent. of total donor contributions) to the World Bank. In 2003, the percentage share of IDA's total lending on health and other social services was 19 per cent. ($1.4 billion). DFID country based offices work closely with the World Bank in financing and developing the health sector with country governments.

The Department provided £12.5 million in 2003 to WHO international programmes, including support for their "Making Pregnancy Safer" Programme. This programme is providing technical support to countries to disseminate and apply evidence-based policy and practice in maternal health, particularly on skilled attendance, management of complications, and strengthening health systems. This includes work with government on regulatory frameworks that better support women's health, on training programmes for skilled attendance and on translating national maternal health strategies into provincial and district plans and

budgets. The programme is also carrying out research to support its work, for example, on links between maternal and newborn health and poverty.

DFID is represented on the steering committee of the Partnership for Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health together with the World Bank, the WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and other organisations. The Partnership aims to raise awareness of the extent and consequences of maternal deaths and ill health, disseminate lessons learnt, and encourage action to help vulnerable populations. DFID will be monitoring the impact that its contribution makes to global partnerships, including the Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health Partnership.

DFID gave UNFPA £18 million in 2003. UNFPA plays an important role in providing the widest achievable range of safe and effective family planning and contraceptive methods, including condoms to prevent HIV/AIDS. UNFPA is putting in place a medium term strategic plan, which seeks to enhance its organisational effectiveness. The UNFPA programme focuses on family planning, skilled attendance at birth and emergency obstetrics to prevent maternal mortality. Reproductive health and rights continue to be a key priority area for DFID and we remain firmly committed to the 1994 ICPD target of achieving access to reproductive health for all by 2015. We have continued to lobby hard for reproductive rights in international fora, and we work closely with partners such as the United Nations Population Fund.

DFID supports UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan and in 2003 we provided £17 million in core resources. UNICEF implements programmes aimed at reducing maternal mortality. Achievements in this area during 2002 were:

In 58 countries with high child and maternal mortality and morbidity rates, UNICEF implemented an integrated approach to early childhood development that linked national policies, the provision of basic services (preventive health, nutrition, safe water, sanitation and hygiene), and improved family care practices for young children and mothers.

Improved families' access to insecticide-treated mosquito nets, anti-malarial and other essential drugs, and micro-nutrient supplements in 44 countries, primarily in Africa. Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to malaria.

Strengthened capacity for safe delivery, including training of obstetricians and birth attendants, provision of birth kits and equipment. A strategy for emergency obstetric care was successfully implemented in the six South Asian countries where most of the world's maternal deaths occur.

Improved access for HIV-infected mothers and their partners to antiretroviral therapy (in conjunction with other UN agencies).

Poverty (Definition)

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what definition he uses of *(a)* poor and *(b)* middle income countries; and if he will list the countries so defined. [148499]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: The poorest countries are those classified as low income, while poor countries also include those classified as middle income. DFID uses the same classification system as the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. Under this system, countries are classified according to their GNI per capita levels in 1998:

Low income countries are those with a 1998 GNI per capita less than $760.

Lower middle income countries have a 1998 GNI per capita level of $761 or above but not exceeding $3,030.

Upper middle income countries have a 1998 GNI per capita level of $3,031 or above but not exceeding $9,360.

The following list shows the countries that fall into each of these categories and current statistics are based on these groups.

These classifications will change for aid flows after 1 January 2003 when thresholds based on 2001 GNI per capita levels will be used.

Low income

Afghanistan
Angola
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Benin
Bhutan
Burkina Faso
Burma
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
China
Comoros
Congo
Congo (Dem. Rep.)
Cote d'Ivoire
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Haiti
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Kenya
Korea (North)
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Moldova
Mongolia
Mozambique

Nepal
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Rwanda
Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands
Somalia
Sudan
Tajikistan
Tanzania
Togo
Turkmenistan
Tuvalu
Uganda
Vietnam
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Lower middle income

Albania
Algeria
Belarus
Belize
Bolivia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Cape Verde
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Djibouti
Dominica
Dominican Republic
East Timor
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Fiji
Georgia
Guatemala
Guyana
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Jamaica
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kiribati
Latvia
Lithuania
Macedonia (FYR of)
Maldives
Marshall Islands
Micronesia, Fed. States
Moldova
Morocco
Namibia
Nieu
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Pitcairn
Romania
Russia
Samoa (Western)
Serbia and Montenegro
Slovakia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
St. Vincent
Surinam
Swaziland
Syria
Thailand
Tokelau
Tonga
Tunisia
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Wallis and Futuna
West Bank and Gaza Strip

Upper middle income

Anguilla
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Bahrain
Barbados
Botswana
Brazil
Chile
Cook Islands
Croatia
Czech Republic
Estonia
Gabon
Grenada
Hungary
Lebanon
Malaysia
Mayotte
Mauritius
Mexico
Montserrat
Nauru
Oman
Palau Islands
Panama
Poland

Saudi Arabia
Seychelles
St. Helena and Dependencies
St. Kitts-Nevis
St. Lucia
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkey
Turks and Caicos Islands
Uruguay
Venezuela

Poverty Reduction Strategies

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the adoption and implementation of effective poverty reduction strategies by 2004 in all countries accessing International Development Association high impact or adjustment lending. [148520]

Hilary Benn: All countries accessing resources, including adjustment loans, from the concessional lending arm of the World Bank—the International Development Association (IDA)—are required to have completed, or be in the process of completing, full Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Of the 53 countries that are already in the process, 32 are implementing full PRSPs. In 2003, 14 countries with interim strategies moved to full PRSPs. It is expected that, during 2004, a similar number of interim strategies will be finalised.

DFID attaches importance to countries preparing their PRSPs in a way that builds and sustains country ownership through broad participation and consultation. Some countries take longer than others to finalise their PRSPs, particularly if they are affected by conflict.

DFID continues to press for improvements in the PRSP process to correct weaknesses that have been identified, such as inadequate specification of priorities, insufficient attention to public expenditure management systems, and weak analysis of the poverty impact of policies. We welcome the progress which IDA is making in aligning its assistance in support of PRSPs, and are encouraging other multilateral and bilateral donors to do so, too.

Sudan

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of *(a)* the level and *(b)* the effectiveness of humanitarian aid in Southern Sudan. [148124]

Hilary Benn: For 2003 the UN reports that $237 million was provided for humanitarian assistance in Sudan, compared to a Humanitarian Appeal of $262 million: although the UN do not provide a breakdown, more than half of this is spent in south Sudan. In 2004 the UN is requesting $465 million. The larger amount this year takes into account the need to fund a wider range of activities in expectation of a peace agreement to end the civil war.

We consider humanitarian aid in south Sudan to be effective. We provide significant support to agencies who are active there.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many international secondments have been made by his Department to Sudan in each of the last three years; and if he will list their responsibilities. [148125]

Hilary Benn: There are two members of DFID staff seconded to Sudan :

One is seconded to the post of UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan (May 2002 to April 2005).

The other is seconded to the United Nations Development Programme as Post Conflict Recovery Programme specialist (April 2003 to September 2004)

Tanzania

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent estimate he has made of the *(a)* level and *(b)* geographical distribution of food shortages in Tanzania. [148123]

Hilary Benn: The Government of Tanzania (GoT) carried out an initial crop assessment in May 2003 followed by a rapid vulnerability assessment in July. A further vulnerability assessment will not be appropriate until after the February 2004 harvest is complete. However, food insecurity remains widespread with pockets of scarcity in at least 17 regions of Tanzania. As requested by GoT, DFID is funding Save the Children and Oxfam to facilitate the production of a food security update over the coming month.

UN GDP Target

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development by when the Government are committed to achieving the UN target of 0.7 per cent. of national income to be spent on development assistance. [148456]

John Healey: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1997 the UK's level of official development assistance (oda) has increased in real terms by 93 per cent. UK oda will reach an oda/gni ratio of 0.40 per cent. in 2005–06, up from 0.33 per cent. in 2003–04, exceeding the EU target of 0.39 per cent. for member states, and more double the current G7 average of 0.19 per cent. The UK remains committed to the UN target of 0.7 per cent. oda/GNI and to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. To this end the Chancellor has proposed an International Finance Facility that would raise an additional £50 billion per year for development assistance up to 2015. Any timetable for reaching 0.7 per cent. oda/GNI will be a matter for future Parliaments.

Zimbabwe

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the impact which the decision of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to commence foreign currency auctions will have on the ability of aid agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance in the country. [147775]

Hilary Benn: As a result of the new auction system, the sale of foreign exchange at a realistic rate within Zimbabwe is now legal. This should make financial operations easier for aid agencies when exchanging their foreign exchange for Zimbabwe dollars and we do not expect it to have any negative impact on the ability of aid agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) how much money his Department has contributed since the start of the 2003–04 financial year through *(a)* non-governmental organisations and *(b)* UN feeding programmes to assist the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe; and how much he plans to spend in 2004–05; [148542]

(2) if he will formally request the Government of Zimbabwe to release the results of its vulnerability assessment; [148583]

(3) if he will formally request the Government of Zimbabwe to release a revised crop forecast and the assumptions on which it is based; [148584]

(4) if he will list the areas in Zimbabwe which suffer from *(a)* raised levels of malnutrition, *(b)* unmet needs and *(c)* continuing dependence on food aid. [148642]

Hilary Benn: The information requested is as follows:

Financial

1. So far this financial year DFID have spent £20.5 million in Zimbabwe, from a total budget of £35 million. Of the total budget, we have committed £5 million to WFP for general food distribution and we are considering a further contribution. £19 million will be channelled through NGOs for targeted food distributions and subsistence farming inputs. The remaining funds are for HIV/AIDS mitigation, prevention and basic vaccines. Due to the anticipated continuation of the humanitarian crisis, funding for the financial year 2004–05 is expected to be at a similar level.

Vulnerability assessment

2. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) conducts the national vulnerability assessments that form the basis of the humanitarian response. This committee is composed of government, NGO and UN Agencies' representatives. The most recent assessment undertaken by the ZimVAC is the Urban Vulnerability Assessment, which the Government are expected to release by the end of this month.

Crop forecast

3. Initial government crop forecasts are usually made by the end of January. However, given the present capacity of the Government, these are unlikely to be accurate or reliable. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation are already working on their own forecasts which should also be available at the end of January. Preliminary estimates by one of the major donors suggest a harvest of around 500,000 MT of maize. This compares to a 2003 cereal harvest of about 900,000 MT and a cereal requirement of approximately 2 million MT.

Malnutrition

4. *(a)* The most recent national nutrition survey, conducted in February 2003, showed that levels of acute malnutrition were relatively low throughout Zimbabwe (approximately 5 per cent.) in comparison to other food-based emergencies, suggesting the effective coverage of the humanitarian relief operation. However, levels of severe acute malnutrition are disproportionately high relative to levels of moderate malnutrition, suggesting a high incidence of paediatric HIV/AIDS. Provinces with the highest rates of acute malnutrition were Manicaland (6.6 per cent.) and Midlands (6.0 per cent.).

Unmet needs

(b) Unmet needs exist most evidently in areas that were not addressed by the original UN WFP operation in the expectation that the Zimbabwean Government would make food and agricultural inputs available. These areas include the former commercial farming areas and urban centres such as Harare and Bulawayo. The humanitarian community is working to address these needs.

Food aid dependence

(c) Dependence on food aid is a concern, particularly in areas of low employment and agricultural activity, such as Binga District where approximately 90 per cent. of the population are dependent on food aid. DFID is working in collaboration with development partners to reduce food aid dependence by providing agricultural inputs to enable subsistence farmers to grow food crops to feed themselves.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what assistance his Department *(a)* has given and *(b)* plans to give to humanitarian aid workers affected by the banking crisis in Zimbabwe; [148637]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the banking crisis in Zimbabwe on the ability to *(a)* pay aid workers and *(b)* deliver aid; [148688]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the impact on food aid to Zimbabwe arising from the estimated $111 million shortfall in donations to the World Food Programme. [148689]

Hilary Benn: The information is as follows:

Humanitarian aid workers affected by the banking crisis

My Department is in frequent contact with the non-governmental organisations delivering UK funded humanitarian aid in Zimbabwe. The banking crisis has not significantly affected their operating capacity so far but we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Impact of the banking crisis

The main impact of the banking crisis has been that cheques from a few, generally newer, banks were not accepted by a number of retailers and the more established banks. Few, if any, of the aid agencies and their employees working with my Department have accounts with these banks. Following the intervention of the Zimbabwe Reserve Bank, these affected banks are now clearing their cheques again and individuals have been able to access their accounts.

WFP funding shortfall

On 16 January 2004 the World Food Programme's appeal of approximately US$195 million for the current emergency operation in Zimbabwe was 80 per cent. funded. The funding shortfall is therefore approximately US$39 million. DFID have already committed £5 million to WFP operations in Zimbabwe

this financial year and we are currently considering a further pledge. DFID will contribute approximately £30 million to humanitarian operations this year and has contributed a total of £62 million since the start of the crisis in September 2001.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Airport Security

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has made to the owners of Belfast International airport on maintaining adequate police security at the airport. [147197]

Jane Kennedy: My officials have had recent and ongoing communications with the Belfast International airport authorities and other interested parties to ensure that appropriate policing standards are maintained.

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the implications for security of the reduction in the number of police officers patrolling Belfast International airport. [147198]

Jane Kennedy: Following a review of security at the Belfast International airport, new arrangements have been put in place for some static police posts. However, there is to be no reduction in the number of police officers patrolling at Belfast International airport, neither within the terminal building or the wider complex. Indeed, new policing arrangements will result in a net increase in this activity.

Caesarean Sections

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to review practice on the performing of caesarean sections in hospitals in Northern Ireland. [148828]

Angela Smith: In 2001, Northern Ireland hospitals took part in the "National Sentinel Caesarean Section Audit", in collaboration with the Department of Health in England and Wales and the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE). The audit was undertaken by the Clinical Effectiveness Support Unit of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and was carried out in response to concerns over the variation in caesarean section rates across the United Kingdom.

Following the audit, the Clinical Effectiveness Support Unit on behalf of NICE has been developing clinical guidelines for caesarean section. The Department, Boards and Trusts will carefully consider these guidelines when they are produced. In the meantime, the Department will continue to work with the professionals concerned to ensure that care delivered locally is of the highest quality.

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of births in Northern Ireland were by caesarean section in the last 12 months for which figures were available; and what the figures were *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 15 years ago. [148835]

Angela Smith: The table sets out the percentage of births to Northern Ireland residents that were by caesarean section.

Percentage

Year of Birth	*Caesarean Sections*
1988[1]	N/A
1993	14.2
1998	20.3
2003[2]	26.2

[1] Data not available for 1988
[2] Data for 2003 is provisional
Source:
Child Health System

Lesser-used Languages,

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his estimate is of the number of speakers of *(a)* each European lesser-used language and *(b)* other languages used in Northern Ireland. [149227]

Angela Smith: The following table provides details of speakers of lesser-used languages recognised under the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:

Language	*Speakers*	*Source and comments*
Irish	106,844	Persons aged three and over (NI census, 2001). In total 167,490 persons have 'some knowledge' of Irish
Ulster-Scots	35,000	Approximate, based on 2 per cent. of population. (NI Life and Times Survey, 1999)

We have no information on the number of users of other European lesser-used languages. I estimate their numbers to be minimal.

The approximate numbers of speakers of other languages used in Northern Ireland are as follows:

Language	*Speakers*	*Source and comment*
English	1,700,000+	All Irish and Ulster-Scots speakers are bilingual. See "In other words", Daniel Holder (2003) for information on knowledge of English among speakers of other languages
Chinese	4,200	Various dialects are spoken. NI census (2001) recorded 4,200 people of Chinese ethnic origin. Holder (2003) estimates 8,000
British Sign Language	3,000	British Deaf Association
Irish Sign Language	1,500	British Deaf Association
Cant/Shelta/Gammon	1,700	Oral languages of the Irish Traveller Community Holder (2003), Kirk and O Baoill (2002)
Arabic	1,000–1,500	Holder (2003), Modern Standard Arabic, also including speakers of Western and Eastern Arabic
Portuguese	1,000+	Holder (2003)
Tagalog	600	Holder (2003) (National Language of the Philippines)
Bengali	450–500	Holder (2003)
Hindi or Punjabi	1,700	Holder (2003)
Southern Indian Languages	500	Holder (2003) includes Tamil, Kannada, Kanta, Malay ala, Marati, Oriya and Telugu
Farsi	350	Holder (2003)

There are also smaller numbers of other language speakers such as Albanian; Turkish; African Languages such as Swahili; Afghani; Russian; Japanese; Hebrew; Korean; Vietnamese; Mallayo; Thai and speakers of other European Languages such as French and Spanish (both from those countries and from other countries where those languages are spoken). In total there are over 70 minority ethnic languages spoken in Northern Ireland (Holder, 2003).

HIV

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the number of HIV sufferers in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years. [148773]

Angela Smith: The estimated number of HIV sufferers in Northern Ireland between 1998 and 2002 is shown in the following table.

	HIV infected individuals
1998	181
1999	195
2000	214
2001	233
2002	257

Notes:
The figures refer to persons diagnosed with HIV and show the cumulative number of HIV infected individuals each year, i.e. the number up to and including the relevant year. Some persons who are no longer living in Northern Ireland may be included.
Source:
Health Protection Agency

House Fires

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many house fires there were in Northern Ireland in 2003; and how many deaths arose from them. [148840]

Angela Smith: The total number of fires in dwellings during 2003 was 1606, from which there were 11 deaths.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the timescale is for the issuing of industrial tribunal decisions to the appellant. [149215]

Jane Kennedy: There is no statutory time scale for issuing industrial tribunal decisions to the parties. However the Office of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal aim to issue 80 per cent. of decisions within six weeks of the end of the hearing.

Hare Hunting

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to increase the three week consultation period before imposing the temporary ban in hunting and coursing of hares in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [142940]

Angela Smith: The proposed temporary ban on the killing or taking, or the sale or purchase, of Irish hares would be made through a special protection order, under the provisions of section 7C(1) of the Game Preservation Act (Northern Ireland) 1928. Section 7F(5) of the Act requires that notice of the proposed ban be placed in the *Belfast Gazette*, specifying the time within which objections may be made. A four-week period for this purpose was considered to be reasonable.

Accordingly, a notice was placed in the 31 October edition of the *Belfast Gazette*, specifying a four-week deadline, to 28 November, for objections to be lodged. The Department of the Environment also published the notice in the three Belfast daily newspapers on 3, 4 and 5 November and wrote directly to a number of interested parties.

Almost 3,000 objections to the proposed Order were received within the specified period. Such a volume of replies would suggest that the period for objection was sufficient for those who wished to express their opposition to the proposed ban. I expect to make a final decision on the proposed Order shortly.

NHS Suspensions

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many employees of the NHS in Northern Ireland are suspended from work; [148943]

(2) what the cost to the NHS in Northern Ireland was in the last 12 months of the suspension from work of employees; [148944]

(3) how many NHS employees in Northern Ireland were dismissed in each of the last five years. [148946]

Angela Smith: 26 Health and Personal Social Services employees are currently suspended from work.

The cost to the Health and Personal Social Services of employees suspended from work in the financial year April 2002 to March 2003 was £214,185. This is the most recent period for which figures are available:

The number of Health and Personal Social Services employees whose contract of employment have been terminated on disciplinary grounds in the last five years is set out in the following table:

	Permanent staff	*Temporary staff*	*Total*
1998–99	34	1	35
1999–2000	35	3	38
2000–01	48	3	51
2001–02	45	7	52
2002–03	30	2	32

Organised Crime

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on measures to tackle organised crime in Northern Ireland. [147837]

Jane Kennedy: The Organised Crime Task Force was established to further enhance co-operation between the law enforcement agencies in combating organised crime and to co-ordinate and focus their efforts. This has resulted in greater success and effectiveness and I pay tribute to the activity of the law enforcement agencies, which have made a significant impact against the organised criminals over the past 12 months. These have included: unprecedented successes against illegal drug importation; a 50 per cent. reduction in the number of

attacks on cash-in-transit vehicles; and a second year of growth in the levels of legitimate deliveries of road fuel oils into Northern Ireland after five years of decline.

The Government are also fully committed to working with the Government in the Irish Republic to develop a cohesive strategy to tackle and manage the joint response to cross-border organised crime.

Private Health Care

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the sum spent in Northern Ireland on private health care in each of the last five years. [148942]

Angela Smith: The information requested is not available. However, a report published by my Department in April 2002, "Securing our Future Health: Taking a Long-term view-Northern Ireland Position", calculated that in 2000, some 6 per cent. of the Northern Ireland population was covered by private medical insurance, compared to 12.5 per cent. in Great Britain.

Racism (Chinese Community)

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to deal with the problem of racism and racist incidents towards the Chinese community in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [148258]

Mr. Paul Murphy: The Community Safety Strategy, being implemented through the Community Safety Unit of the Northern Ireland Office, identified Key Issue 6 : Offences Motivated by Prejudice and Hatred, as a central theme in making Northern Ireland a safer place for all its citizens.

Specifically, it seeks to reduce the levels of crime motivated by sectarianism, and promote and enhance the safety of minority ethnic residents.

Currently, it is facilitating a working group of relevant voluntary and statutory organisations, which aims to establish a clear framework for the recording and monitoring of racial incidents. It is hoped to bring forward such an agreed framework by the spring 2004.

Also, within its community safety grant programme, the challenge competition, it has provided funding towards four projects that have a central theme of countering prejudice and hatred, at a total value of £273,255.

In addition to these initiatives the Government will publish shortly for consultation, draft legislation for Northern Ireland, aimed at tackling racially motivated offences. The proposed draft Order introduces provisions that will require sentencers, where offences are aggravated by such hostility, to treat racial and religious aggravation as an aggravating factor when sentencing. (The legislation will also cover offences motivated by hatred of sexual orientation.) The provisions will also increase maximum sentences available for certain specified, mainly violent, offences including where racial, religious or sexual aggravation is proven. While I recognise the unacceptable nature of recent attacks, these provisions will cover a broad range of racial and ethnic groups, not just the Chinese community.

The Government have frequently put on record their abhorrence of all forms of intolerance and are committed to eradicating such manifestations of hatred, whether based on racism or based on sectarianism. I reiterate the acknowledgement in the Belfast Agreement of the unique opportunity that exists here to bring about a society

> "which will recognise the full and equal legitimacy and worth of identities, senses of allegiance and ethos of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland".

River Pollution

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to prevent the discharge of harmful materials into rivers. [148831]

Angela Smith: Under the Water (NI) Order 1999, it is an offence to discharge or deposit, whether knowingly or otherwise, any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter so that it enters a waterway, the penalty for which on summary conviction is imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding £20,000, or both. The Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), an Executive Agency of the Department of the Environment (DOE), is responsible for enforcing this legislation.

To prevent pollution incidents from occurring, and to minimise the effect of any pollution on the environment, pollution prevention advice is offered by EHS to educate the public and industry, in promoting good environmental practices. If a pollution incident is reported or discovered, EHS aims to locate and stop the source of the pollution, identify the polluter and if appropriate, collect sufficient evidence to secure a prosecution.

It is also an offence to discharge effluent to waterways or groundwater without the consent of the DOE. EHS is responsible for issuing "consents to discharge" that detail specific conditions relating to the quality and quantity of effluent discharged. The conditions are formulated to ensure that the discharge can be sustained by the receiving waterway without damage to the aquatic environment and without breaching national or EC Directive standards. Failure to comply with the conditions of a consent is also an offence under the Water Order, and where consent compliance is consistently poor, or there is a pollution incident, enforcement action will be considered.

Water Service is not bound by the statutory discharge consent requirements of the Water Order, however a separate but similar regulatory system has been established to control Water Service discharges. This system has been detailed in the recently published report "Regulation of Water Service Discharges 2001", a copy of which has been placed in the Assembly library. The report is also available on the EHS website at http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/pubs/publications/Reg WSD.pdf

School Fruit

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on plans to make fruit available to school pupils. [148772]

Angela Smith: A pilot Fresh Fruit in Schools Scheme was launched in Northern Ireland in October 2002. It currently provides a free piece of fruit daily to over 4,800 Primary 1 and 2 children in 87 primary schools within Health Action Zone areas. An initial evaluation of the scheme has recently been completed and consideration is currently being given to extending the scheme to include a larger number of children.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the number of sufferers of *(a)* chlamydia, *(b)* gonorrhoea and *(c)* syphilis in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years. [148774]

Angela Smith: Information is not available on the estimated number of sufferers of *(a)* chlamydia, *(b)* gonorrhoea and *(c)* syphilis in Northern Ireland. Information is, however, available on the number of cases seen each year at Genito-Urinary Medicine clinics, and is shown for the years 1998 to 2002 in the following table.

	Cases seen		
	Chlamydia	*Gonorrhoea*	*Syphilis*
1998	660	61	0
1999	794	110	1
2000	963	143	0
2001	947	148	11
2002	1,170	117	20

Notes:
The figures refer to the number of cases seen at Genito-Urinary Medicine clinics each year. Some of these cases may also have been seen in previous years, therefore it is not possible to provide a cumulative total of persons with these diseases. Figures are shown in respect of uncomplicated genital chlamydia, uncomplicated gonorrhoea and primary and secondary syphilis.
Source:
Health Protection Agency

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support and advice are being given to the interim government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in respect of *(a)* respect for human rights and *(b)* the nurture of democratic institutions. [148080]

Mr. Mullin: We are committed to promoting respect for human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through continued dialogue with the DRC authorities, the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC—who have specialist human rights staff) and human rights Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

In collaboration with other donors we are considering ways to provide core financial support to the five Democracy Support Commissions that form part of the framework of transitional institutions in the DRC. These are the Independent Electoral Commission; the High Media Authority; the Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and the Human Rights Observatory.

We have contributed €1 million to the European Community/World bank Trust Fund to provide start-up logistical support to DRC transitional institutions and new Ministries created by the 2002 Global Accord. We are providing technical assistance to the Anti-Corruption Commission, for which we are the lead donor. We are also funding the NGO Panos Paris to build capacity in the media sector in close co-operation with the High Media Authority.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the upholding of human rights in the conflict zones of the Congo is undertaken by United Kingdom representatives; and if he will make a statement. [148300]

Mr. Mullin: We monitor closely the human rights situation throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This is achieved through our Embassies in the region and through discussions with the DRC's National Human Rights Observatory, Non-Governmental Organisations, the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) and other UN bodies.

Robert Ellis

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations on behalf of Mr. Robert Ellis were made by the Minister of State when he visited Turkey this month. [149392]

Mr. MacShane: The case of Mr. Robert Ellis was discussed during my meeting with the Head of the Turkish European Secretariat General (equivalent to the European Secretariat) in Ankara on 13 January. As the right hon. Member is already aware from my letter to him of 7 January 2004, the Ambassador and his staff have made vigorous efforts on behalf of Mr. Ellis during the last six years.

Departmental Relocation

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146865]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146881]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146894]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146925]

Mr. Straw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury gave on 12 January 2003, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in his Department work in *(a)* the West Midlands and *(b)* North Staffordshire. [146910]

Mr. Straw: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office do not employ staff in the West Midlands or North Staffordshire. UKTI (jointly responsible to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and me) fund the delivery of services through a Regional UKTI Team and staff employed by the Business Link/Chamber network in the region.

In the West Midlands the total number of staff working on the UKTI agenda is 41 of which 19 are civil servants (employed by the Government Office on UKTIs behalf). The Staffordshire UKTI Team consists of eight (two civil servants) and of these five are based in North Staffordshire (one civil servant).

Entry Clearance

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance applications were *(a)* made and *(b)* refused worldwide in each of the last six years. [147064]

Mr. Mullin: The following table shows the number of entry clearance applications received and refused worldwide during each year from 1998. Since 2001, statistics have been collated by financial year (1 April to 31 March) rather than calendar year.

Year	*Received*	*Refused*
1998	1,462,599	85,041
1999	1,514,764	100,616
2000	1,674,110	117,142
FY 2001–2002	1,750,459	176,217
FY 2002–2003	1,941,910	249,830

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance applications were *(a)* received and *(b)* refused in (i) India, (ii) Pakistan, (iii) China, (iv) Nigeria, (v) Ghana, (vi) Russia, (vii) Poland, (viii) Ukraine, (ix) Zimbabwe and (x) the Philippines in each of the last six years. [147065]

Mr. Mullin: The following table shows the numbers of entry clearance applications received in the countries specified during each year from 1998. Since 2001, statistics have been collated by financial year (1 April to 31 March) rather than by calendar year.

Country	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*FY 2001–02*	*FY 2002–03*
India	159,689	175,664	186,725	210,049	236,431
Pakistan	77,150	81,102	96,796	111,959	74,043
China	39,492	47,841	69,090	94,331	116,620
Nigeria	55,616	72,101	83,725	108,448	144,245
Ghana	22,901	28,308	34,144	46,425	65,684
Russia	77,323	56,736	65,544	68,956	73,971
Poland	1,409	1,568	1,509	1,710	2,189
Ukraine	23,727	22,693	26,145	23,712	24,734
Zimbabwe	1,955	1,900	2,960	3,272	14,377
Philippines	17,868	19,868	25,868	28,290	30,484

The following table shows the numbers of entry clearance applications refused in the countries specified during each year from 1998.

Country	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*FY 2001–02*	*FY 2002–03*
India	14,261	18,187	20,622	24,136	39,642
Pakistan	10,493	15,214	15,989	32,324	10,173
China	2,602	3,727	6,363	10,399	14,210
Nigeria	10,073	10,044	12,139	16,711	33,221
Ghana	5,078	5,355	7,783	21,016	33,985
Russia	2,105	1,248	1,421	2,552	2,331
Poland	116	115	213	109	178
Ukraine	2,580	2,843	3,121	3,794	3,862
Zimbabwe	254	222	444	555	4,240
Philippines	1,584	1,274	1,161	1,761	4,074

The significant increase in figures for received and refused applications in Zimbabwe during the financial year 2002–2003 is the result of the implementation of the Visa regime in Zimbabwe on 8 November 2002 coupled with the increased demand for visas because of the unstable political situation in Zimbabwe during this period.

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what involvement the Government's representative had in promoting acceptance of the Boundary Commission Report on the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea; and if he will make a statement. [148301]

Mr. Mullin: I, together with our Ambassadors in Addis Ababa and Asmara, take every opportunity to emphasise to both parties that the Boundary Commission's decision is final and binding; that both should avoid any return to war; and that dialogue is essential to address all the issues separating Ethiopia and Eritrea. I visited Eritrea and Ethiopia between 13 and 19 January during which time I had extensive discussions on the border with a range of interested parties including President Isaias of Eritrea and Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia.

Ghana

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that Ghana adheres to international standards on human rights. [148157]

Mr. Mullin: Ghana generally performs well on human rights issues. We welcome the fact that Ghana has signed up to and ratified the six major UN treaties on human rights. Ghana also volunteered to be one of the

first countries to participate in the African Peer Review Mechanism (a voluntary process to monitor and raise governance standards in Africa).

We regularly meet with the Government of Ghana to discuss a range of governance issues and raise concerns on human rights in this context. We regularly lobby the Ghanaians on the removal of the death penalty from their statute book.

Lockerbie

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government will seek to recoup any of the costs incurred in *(a)* investigations into the Lockerbie bombing and *(b)* holding the (i) trial and (ii) appeal by the accused; and if he will make a statement. [143009]

Mr. Rammell: There are arrangements in place for the US Government to contribute to the overall costs of the Lockerbie trial and appeal. There is no power in Scottish criminal procedure to make awards of expenses against the accused.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the total cost to the UK taxpayer was of the *(a)* investigations into the Lockerbie bombing, *(b)* trial of those accused of the bombing and *(c)* appeal by the accused. [143010]

Mr. Rammell: Responsibility for the accounting of all costs of the Lockerbie trial and its aftermath is a matter for the Scottish Executive. They calculate that the total costs of holding the trial in the Netherlands, including pre-trial and appeal costs, amounted to £75.8 million.

Middle East

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of progress in the implementation of the Middle East roadmap proposals. [148467]

Mr. Rammell *[holding answer 19 January 2004]*: Despite the welcome undertakings made at the Aqaba Summit, there has been a disappointing lack of progress on the roadmap's Phase One requirements. Israel has implemented neither the settlement freeze nor the dismantling of settlement outposts erected since March 2001. The Palestinian Authority has not begun sustained, targeted and effective operations against terrorists. Both sides should now simultaneously fulfil the obligations they have both accepted under Phase One of the roadmap.

Nigeria

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Nigerian Government concerning the burning down by Muslim extremists of churches and church-owned properties during November 2003 in the town of Kazaure, Jigawa state. [149082]

Mr. Mullin: We are in close touch with the Nigerian authorities. We are concerned about the violence, which affected Muslims as well as Christians. The Jigawa State Government has said that it will take strong measures against the wrong-doers. Officials from the British High Commission in Abuja take every opportunity to emphasise to the States Governors that all criminal acts, including violence, should be dealt with by proper authorities through the courts.

The UK believes that establishing dialogue between Christians and Muslims at all levels is the best way to create understanding and mutual tolerance. We support the work of Coventry Cathedral's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in Kaduna and are looking to expand this work to other States in Nigeria.

Overseas Visitors

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people entered the UK from *(a)* Russia and *(b)* China in the latest year for which figures are available. [148410]

Beverley Hughes: The latest available information is given in the table.

Passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom under all categories, by nationality, 2002

	Number of journeys— all categories
Russia	167,000
People's Republic of China	228,000

The figures in this table have been rounded to three significant digits.

Data on passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom are published in the Command Paper 'Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2002' (Cm6053), obtainable from the Library, The Stationery Office and via the Home Office website http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hobpubs1.html.

St. Helena/Tristan da Cunha

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on *(a)* St. Helena and *(b)* Tristan da Cunha. [148230]

Mr. Rammell: The Government are working hard to help the people of St. Helena. A range of issues is under consideration at the present time with air access, a new constitution, improved sea access, exports of wild honey and student fees among them. Many of these issues require co-ordination across Government departments, which is currently under way. It is our intention and has been our practice to ensure that the Government of St. Helena gets the best possible advice from the relevant experts, funded in the main by the Department for International Development. The next major visit to the island by DfID/FCO officials will be in April/May when budgetary talks are due to take place.

The smaller territory of Tristan da Cunha reports its activities on a periodic basis to its Governor, based in St. Helena. Largely self-sufficient through its fishing and related export activities, it receives a small amount of funding each year from the Department of International Development. It is constantly on the lookout for new ways of raising revenue so that it can become more financially independent and start to build its reserves. Tristan Islanders are working with EU officials to gain a licence that would enable them to export crayfish caught in their waters for sale in the EU.

Visa Charges

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to introduce visa charges for US citizens who wish to visit the United Kingdom. [148155]

Mr. Mullin: US citizens do not require a visa to visit the United Kingdom and therefore no visa charges will be introduced.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with her European Union counterparts on the proposed location of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor; and if she will make a statement. [149380]

Jacqui Smith: Ministers and officials have taken part in various discussions with other members of the European Union on the proposed location for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor. I attended the 11 November 2003 Competitiveness Council discussion on the European candidate site and expressed the UK's support for the European bid.

Broadband

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the roll out of broadband in Lancashire. [148415]

Mr. Timms: Under the Department's £30 million broadband fund, the North West Development Agency (NWDA) is launching three pilot demonstrator projects in Lancashire, which will focus on encouraging access and take up of ICT over broadband. The NWDA is in the final stages of procurement for Project ACCESS, which will enable provision of affordable broadband access in Cumbria and that part of Lancashire north of the Lancaster district boundary. The NWDA has also supported the formation of the Lancashire Digital Development Agency (LDDA), a grouping of public, private and voluntary sector partners who take the responsibility for promoting the delivery of an advanced broadband infrastructure and to maximise its take up. (Source: www.nwda.co.uk).

Under the Department's Broadband Aggregation Project (BAP), the North West Regional Aggregation Body (NW-RAB), has been incorporated to aggregate and procure public sector demand for broadband connectivity. The NW-RAB is working with stakeholders in the region to develop a strategy that will offer best value for money and the widest availability of broadband to surrounding communities.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the county of Durham has broadband coverage; and what action she intends to take to encourage greater coverage. [148854]

Mr. Timms: The data for the percentage of broadband coverage in the county of Durham are not available within Government.

The regional development agency, One NorthEast, in partnership with Durham county council and the local district councils, is driving forward a major £5.1 million project (DurhamNet) to provide a broadband network across the county, via high speed radio technology. Stage one of the project aims to provide broadband access to business, education and community facilities. This work is well under way, with broadband provision to the county's public libraries already in place. The county council is now leading a regional initiative to ensure that all telephone exchanges in the north-east are upgraded to deliver broadband to the region. (source: www.durham. gov.uk/).

The North East Regional Aggregation Body has been incorporated to aggregate and procure public sector demand for broadband connectivity. It is working with stakeholders in the region to develop a strategy that will offer best value for money and the widest availability of broadband to surrounding communities.

Business Link

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of business link organisations; and what plans she has to change these schemes. [148172]

Nigel Griffiths: Overall, Business Link Operators have been successfully delivering business support within their local areas to increasing numbers of small businesses, while at the same time seeing their levels of customer satisfaction continue to rise.

Last year Business Link Operators helped over 300,000 firms and individuals, an increase from 150,000 in 2002, and exceeded their key performance indicators. Market penetration increased from 14 per cent. to 17 per cent. in 2001–02, customer satisfaction with BLO services increased to 84 per cent. from 81 per cent. the previous year and brand awareness increased 9 per cent. to 74 per cent. Results for the current year are also showing a further increase in performance levels. By the end of quarter 2 2003–04, 88,000 more businesses had been assisted than the same time last year; the business penetration rate of 18.5 per cent. was already exceeding last year's performance; and the provisional average customer satisfaction rate of 85.4 per cent. shows a 1 per cent. increase on the last six months and a 3.2 per cent. increase on the same period last year.

The Small Business Service is now engaged in a review of the Business Link business and brand with the aim of building on the brand as the recognised gateway through which small businesses can access appropriate sources of help or support and so will have an impact on the way BLOs operate. The review should conclude during 2004–05 and the principal outcomes be implemented by April 2005.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect Business Link has had on *(a)* the overall productivity of UK businesses, *(b)* reducing disparities in regional productivity, *(c)* the

overall profitability of UK businesses, *(d)* UK business investment and *(e)* levels of private sector employment in the UK. [148186]

Nigel Griffiths: The Small Business Service has introduced from this year a Gross Value Added measure as part of its Performance Management Framework for Business Link. This enables operators to quantify the impact they have had on businesses with which they have formed a more intensive relationship, in terms of wealth creation and productivity improvement.

The most recent evaluation of Business Link did not explore the impact on productivity. However, it did conclude that Business Link provided good value for money in terms of the additional jobs, turnover, profits, assets and exports created at the national, regional and local level. The report on the evaluation, which was carried out by independent consultants Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC), is available on the DTI website (www.dti.gov.uk/about/evaluation).

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what procedures are in place to ensure the accountability of business link organisations. [148195]

Nigel Griffiths: The procedures in place are as follows:

Each year the Small Business Service (SBS) agrees an annual Delivery Plan (DP) with each Business Link Operator (BLO). The Plans are in a common format and include a set of Key Performance Indicators against which targets are agreed between the respective BLO and the SBS.

Each BLO's performance against these targets is monitored by SBS Regional Teams, or by the Regional Development Agency in the East Midlands and North West. BLOs are subject to a Quarterly Performance Review that assesses their performance against the set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Three of the KPIs, Customer Satisfaction, Market Penetration and Number of Intensive Assisted Users, are subject to contractually binding Minimum Performance Levels. BLOs provide performance data on a quarterly basis as part of the SBS Management Information Requirement.

BLOs provide detailed Financial Information at the end of each quarter, which is monitored by the SBS. On an annual basis BLOs are subject to an independent audit of their finances and management information systems by an auditor appointed by the SBS to ensure its funding has been spent on the purposes for which it was given.

All BLOs are subject to UK company law.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many staff have been employed by each business link organisation in each year since their formation; and if she will break the figures down by salary band. [148196]

Nigel Griffiths: Business Link Operators are autonomous independent companies and the Small Business Service does not collect information about their staffing numbers or rates of pay.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria are used to measure the *(a)* success and *(b)* effectiveness of business link organisations. [148198]

Nigel Griffiths: The Small Business Service (SBS) has developed a core set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success and effectiveness of Business Link Operators (BLOs). These indicators are contained in a Performance Management Framework and reflect the performance, value and contribution to the economy made by BLOs.

The indicators are:

awareness of Business Link (prompted and unprompted);

understanding of Business Link services;

use of Business Link branded services (by both businesses and individuals);

financial efficiency (of BLOs);

customer satisfaction;

intensive assisted users of BL branded services;

perceived business benefit; and

changes in Gross Value Added (GVA) of BL customers.

SBS negotiates a delivery plan each year with each BLO individually. The plan includes targets for each KPI that reflect the needs and constitution of each specific BLO area. SBS then subsequently monitors each BLO's performance against their respective targets on a quarterly basis with view to taking appropriate action to address specific or general shortcomings.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley have used Business Link in each of the last three years. [148701]

Nigel Griffiths: The answer to the question is shown in the following table:

	2001-02	*2002-03*	*April-September 2003*
Business Link Operator usage-business customers, in-year cumulative			
East Lancashire	2,973	3,187	2,403
North and west Lancashire	3,156	6,435	5,996
Lancashire total	6,129	9,622	8,399
Business Link Operator usage-pre-starts, quarterly trend			
East Lancashire	1,825	2,534	1,642
North and west Lancashire	750	2,865	1,390
Lancashire total	2,575	5,399	3,032

Employment Statistics

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what the *(a)* actual and *(b)* percentage change in private sector employment was in each month since 1997; [146143]

(2) how many people have been employed in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private sector in each quarter over the last ten years. [148188]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Stephen O'Brien, dated 20 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about jobs in the public and private sectors. (146143, 148188)

Job levels for the private and public sectors are obtained from administrative returns from public bodies and the Labour Force Survey, and are available only on an annual basis. The attached table shows the number of UK jobs in the public and private sectors for each of the ten years from 1993 to 2002, the latest year for which data are available. The table also shows the actual and percentage annual changes.

Numbers of public and private sector jobs in the UK, 1993–2002

Thousands

	Number of jobs		*Annual change*		*Annual percentage change*	
	Public	*Private*	*Public*	*Private*	*Public*	*Private*
1993	5,477	20,791	—	—	—	—
1994	5,292	21,229	-185	438	-3.4	2.7
1995	5,211	21,995	-81	766	-1.5	3.6
1996	5,069	22,307	-142	312	-2.7	1.4
1997	4,954	22,811	-115	504	-2.3	2.3
1998	4,944	23,083	-10	272	-0.2	1.2
1999	5,094	23,272	150	189	3.0	0.8
2000	5,094	23,537	0	265	0.0	1.1
2001	5,212	23,521	118	-16	2.3	-0.1
2002	5,298	23,610	86	89	1.7	0.4

Source:
Labour Force Survey and administrative returns from public bodies

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were in *(a)* public and *(b)* private sector employment, broken down by (i) salary and (ii) employment type for each of the last ten years. [148187]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Stephen O'Brien, dated 20 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about jobs in the public and private sectors. (148187)

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides information on earnings and employment type by sector. However, these figures are based on respondents' own perception of the sector in which they work, and may not correspond to the official classifications of the public and private sector.

Table 1 shows the average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees in the UK, split by sector. Table 2 shows the proportions of full-time and part-time employees in both the public and private sectors. In both cases, data are for twelve month periods ending in November in the years 1994–2003.

Information on the number of jobs in the public and private sectors in each year from 1993–2002 has been provided in an answer to another recent Parliamentary Question that you have asked (148188). However, please note that this information is provided for calendar years and is derived from other sources besides the LFS. It is therefore not consistent with the information on earnings and employment type given in this answer.

Table 1: Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees in the UK

£

Year[1]	*Public Sector*	*Private Sector*
1994	328	291
1995	332	303
1996	346	315
1997	355	329
1998	367	345
1999	383	363
2000	396	382
2001	414	403
2002	431	417
2003	448	431

[1] 12 month period ending in November of given year
Source:
Labour Force Survey

Table 2: Percentage of UK public and private sector jobs that are full and part time

Percentage of total employment

	Private Sector		*Public Sector*	
Year[1]	*Full Time*	*Part Time*	*Full Time*	*Part Time*
1994	78	22	73	27
1995	78	22	72	28
1996	77	23	71	29
1997	77	23	70	30
1998	77	23	70	30
1999	77	23	71	29
2000	77	23	70	30
2001	77	23	70	30
2002	77	23	70	30
2003	76	24	70	30

[1] 12 month period ending in November of given year
Source:
Labour Force Survey

Energy Bill

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Energy Bill has been notified to the European Commission. [149620]

Mr. Timms: The Energy Bill is a public document. There is no requirement to notify the Energy Bill as such to the European Commission. In accordance with Article 88(3) of the European Treaty establishing the European Community, the Government notified to the Commission on 19 December 2003 the state aid that would be involved in the funding of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) under the Bill.

Chapter 2 of Part 3 of the Energy Bill will implement Directives 2003/54/EC and 2003/55/EC and we shall be notifying the commission when the relevant clauses come into force.

We shall consider whether we need to notify to the commission of the changes arising from the introduction of the Renewable Obligation in Northern Ireland, planned for 1 April 2005.

Management Consultants

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the cost to her Department of using management consultants has been in each of the last five years. [148028]

Ms Hewitt: Central records indicate that contracts for management consultants amounted to the following:

£ million

Financial year	Management consultant contracts
1999–2000	21
2000–01	36
2001–02	64
2002–03	42

The higher figure for 2001–02 includes £25 million for Consignia/Post Office in connection with the Government General Practitioner/Your Guide pilot.

Data for 1998–99 are not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Miners' Compensation

Jeff Ennis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the 10 firms of solicitors who have received the most in fees for dealing with miners' compensation claims; and how much each has received. [146657]

Nigel Griffiths: As of 7 January 2004 the figures are:

£ million

Top 10 solicitors	Total solicitors costs
Hugh James Ford Simey	35.8
Thompsons Solicitors	34.6
Raleys Solicitors	23.7
Browell Smith and Co	13.6
Mark Gilbert Morse	10.3
Graysons Solicitors	8.7
Union of Democratic Mineworkers	8.0
Watson Burton Solicitors	7.6
Towells Solicitors	7.6
Beresfords Solicitors	6.3

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what amounts were paid to *(a)* firms of solicitors and *(b)* the Union of Democratic Mineworkers for cases undertaken under the miners' compensation schemes in 2003. [148286]

Nigel Griffiths: The figures are as follows:

£ million

	COPD	VWF
Solicitors cost	119.6	18.0
UDM	3.9	0.9
Total	123.5	18.9

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which trade unions have applied to pursue claims directly under the miners' compensation schemes; and what the reasons were for *(a)* granting and *(b)* rejecting such an application in each case. [148310]

Nigel Griffiths *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* The Department has signed agreements with those bodies appointed by or on behalf of claimants to act for them. In May 1998, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) the then Minister for Energy, invited the mining unions to contribute to these arrangements through their solicitors.

The UDM were themselves dealing with claims and a Claims Handling Agreement was signed with them. The compensation terms were identical to the agreement with the miners' solicitors.

The NUM inquired about having a direct agreement. This was not pursued beyond initial discussions.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms of solicitors are handling coal health claims in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland; and how many are involved with the Claimants Solicitors Group. [147201]

Nigel Griffiths: To date the figures are:

	CSG solicitors	Non-CSG solicitors	Total number
England	353	200	553
Scotland	24	41	65
Wales	56	40	96
Total	433	281	714

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many training days the insurers handling the coal health claims have held for solicitors to date; and how many firms have attended. [147202]

Nigel Griffiths: As of 13 January the figures are:

Training	Number of days	Number of firms attending
Planning days	2	32
Regional workshops	5	60
Solicitors training day, Sheffield Office	2	41
Solicitors Training Day, Edinburgh Office	1	8
Solicitors Training Day, Cardiff Office	1	6
Informal in house operational training	17	10

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been paid to date by the Department to *(a)* the insurers handling the coal health claims and *(b)* the company carrying out the medical assessments. [147204]

Nigel Griffiths: As of mid January 2004 nearly £158 million has been paid to IRISC, the Department's claim handlers and nearly £212 million to the companies who provide the medical assessments.

Regional Productivity

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the rate of productivity growth was in each region of the UK in each of the last five years. [146131]

Ruth Kelly: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Stephen O'Brien, dated 20 January 2004:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question on the productivity of UK companies. (146131)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) does not currently produce estimates of productivity growth by region. Current regional productivity measures estimate the relative performance of regions at a point in time.

We do, however, produce figures on Regional output per hour worked and Regional output per filled job for 1996–2001. These figures can be accessed from the ONS website at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/tsdataset.asp?vlnk=4858&More=Y and http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/tsdataset.asp?vlnk=4860&More=Y

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what reasons her Department does not include printer cartridges in the implementation of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive. [148737]

Mr. Timms: The Government have always considered printer cartridges as consumables and this interpretation has been confirmed by the Department's lawyers. The WEEE Directive only applies to whole products placed on the market and not to individual components, sub-assemblies or consumables.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Pensions

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what estimate he has made of the cost of abolishing the rule on freezing state pensions for those citizens entitled to state pensions who reside in countries for which the United Kingdom has an aid programme; and if he will make a statement; [148536]

(2) how many individuals in each country for which Her Majesty's Government has an aid programme who are entitled to a United Kingdom state pension have them frozen; and if he will make a statement on his policy on frozen pensions. [148537]

Malcolm Wicks: Information on the number of individuals in each country for which this Government has an aid programme who receive a frozen UK State Pension is not available.

However, there were 60,000 recipients of a frozen UK State Pension in the twenty countries receiving the largest amount of UK bilateral aid in 2002–03. The cost of now paying those frozen pensions, using the April 2004 rates, would be around £40 million, with ongoing costs of £40million per annum and rising in future years.

The UK State Pension is uprated in countries with which the UK has a reciprocal social security agreement or where there is a legal requirement to do so. The Government are focusing their resources on helping poorer pensioners in the UK and have no plans to unfreeze UK State Pensions paid overseas.

Notes:

(1) Caseloads have been produced using the DWP Pensions administrative dataset for March 2003.

(2) The nominal costs are calculated using 2004 pension rates, and deflated to 2003–04 price terms.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average increase in income has been for pensioners in Warrington, North since the introduction of the minimum income guarantee. [148249]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is not available.

The average income support award to pensioners in Warrington, North was £37.36 in August 1998, when 2,200 pensioner households were receiving income support. Under Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), which was introduced in April 1999, there were 2,800 pensioner households in Warrington, North receiving an average of £44.29 a week in MIG in August 2003.

In December 2003 there were 3,426 pensioner households receiving an average of £41.19 a week Pension Credit in Warrington, North.

Following the introduction of Pension Credit in October 2003, some elements of the support previously provided through MIG are now provided through local authority funding for people in care homes, and through tax credits for children. In addition, average Pension Credit awards are expected to be lower than MIG because a savings credit of up to £14.79 (single) or £19.20 (couples) is available for people with modest incomes above the guarantee level who previously received nothing from MIG.

As at 31 December, the average level of weekly gain shared by the 1.44 million households now receiving more money as a result of Pension Credit introduction is £10.80.

Notes:

1. MIG caseload figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred and are expressed in thousands, weekly amounts to the nearest penny.

2. MIG figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample, and are therefore subject to a degree of sampling variation.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many properties were inspected by the Health and Safety Executive in connection with suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in the last 12 months; what steps his Department has taken to promote awareness of the problem; and if he will make a statement. [147458]

Mr. Browne: For the period 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003, the latest period for which we have a full year's figure, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigated 86 carbon monoxide (CO) incidents. This figure is provisional.

Measures being taken to promote awareness of carbon monoxide poisoning include the annual winter gas safety awareness campaign overseen by HSE, which this year is targeting students and other first-time renters, elderly people and parents of young children.

HSE's gas safety website contains information on the causes and symptoms of CO, and what to do if poisoning is suspected. This website is currently being upgraded to provide links to other relevant organizations, and access to videos giving detailed information on carbon monoxide poisoning and personal statements from sufferers.

HSE produces free leaflets on gas safety both for general consumers and landlords, including information on carbon monoxide, in twelve community languages as well as English. These are also available on the HSE website.

HSE also operates a Gas Safety Advice line providing free advice to callers. Additionally, where possible, HSE officials actively participate in awareness-raising events run by other organizations such as local community groups when called upon to do so.

During 2003, HSE's gas publicity Working Group examined the feasibility of a carbon monoxide awareness campaign to be voluntarily funded by the gas industry. In September HSE hosted a meeting seeking support for this initiative from the six main gas supply companies. The industry players have committed to produce an agreed strategy plan, which should be implemented this year. The level of funding, although not yet finalized, will be in the region of £3 million a year for a period of seven years to be evaluated after three years.

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on how many occasions the Department has made compensation payments to Electronic Data Systems as a result of contractual changes to the Child Support Agency Reforms information technology project; and what the value was of each of those payments. [149517]

Mr. Pond: The Department has not made any compensation payments to EDS. As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 27 January 2003, *Official Report*, columns 564–68, the Department has previously agreed an increase of around 7 per cent. in the value of the original contract, over its term. This increase reflected that the IT system had proved to be more complex than had been thought at the outset, something not uncommon in large scale IT systems.

Departmental Policies (Regent's Park and Kensington, North)

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the impact of his Department's policies in Regent's Park and Kensington, North constituency since 1997. [145416]

Mr. Browne: The Department for Work and Pensions was formed in June 2001; since then, we have undertaken a fundamental overhaul of the welfare system, transforming it from a passive organisation paying out benefits to an active system that fights poverty, creates opportunity and helps people become self-sufficient and independent.

We are making a significant contribution to the Government's objective of eradicating child poverty in 20 years and halving it within 10, and there are now half a million fewer children in relative low income than there were in 1997. Child Benefit is now worth £16.05 a week for the eldest child, compared to only £11.40 in 1997, benefiting 13,385 families in Regent's Park and Kensington, North.

Through Jobcentre Plus, we are promoting work as the best form of welfare for people of working age. The number of people in work is at historically high levels of over 28.15 million; in Regent's Park and Kensington, North, the proportion in employment has risen to 62.3 per cent. Our New Deals have helped lone parents, the young unemployed, the long-term unemployed, disabled people, the over 50s and partners of the unemployed to move from benefit into work. Nationally over 950,000 people have been helped into work by the New Deals, and over 2,200 have been helped into work in Regent's Park and Kensington, North.

We want all pensioners to have a decent and secure income in retirement and to share fairly in the rising prosperity of the country, and our first priority has been to help the poorest pensioners. The Government will be spending an extra £9.2bn in 2004/5 (in 2003–04 prices) on pensioners as a result of measures introduced since 1997, including around 4.3 billion on the poorest third of pensioners. Our reforms include the State Second Pension, which helps more of tomorrow's pensioners build up better pensions.

Pension Credit, introduced from October 2003, provides a contribution to a guaranteed minimum income for those aged 60 and over and, for the first time, those over aged 65 and over may be rewarded for modest savings and income. Around 5,900 pensioner households in Regent's Park and Kensington, North are already benefiting from Pension Credit, with an average award of £70.33 per week.

Our reforms include the State Second Pension, which helps more of tomorrow's pensioners build up better pensions. Pension Credit, introduced from October 2003, provides a contribution to a guaranteed minimum income for those aged 60 and over and, for the first time, those over aged 65 and over may be rewarded for modest savings and income. Around 5,900 pensioner households in Regent's Park and Kensington, North are already benefiting from Pension Credit, with an average award of £70.33 per week.

We know that older people are disproportionately affected by fuel poverty, and this winter (2003–04) we have made available a Winter Fuel Payment of £200 for each eligible household to help with their fuel bills. In addition, the introduction of the 80+ Annual Payment gives an extra £100 to households where there is someone aged 80 or over. We estimate that around 17,000 older people in Regent's Park and Kensington, North have received a payment this winter.

Some 14,000 pensioners in Regent's Park and Kensington, North benefited from the above inflation increase in the rate of basic state pension from April 2003. Those over 75, of whom we estimate there are about 6,300 in Regent's Park and Kensington, North may also qualify for free TV licences.

Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions why there is a separate form for declaring an industrial injury from that for claiming industrial injury disablement benefit. [147943]

Mr. Browne: Different information is required for a declaration of an industrial injury than for a claim for Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit (IIDB). For example, in the case of a claim for IIDB, information is required as to whether other benefits are in payment; in the case of a declaration, an injured employee may not wish to claim benefit, and therefore information is required only to establish whether an incident can be accepted as an industrial accident.

Jobcentre Plus

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many full-time workers were employed by Jobcentre Plus in Cambridgeshire in each of the last three years. [146441]

Mr. Browne: The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, David Anderson. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from David Anderson to Mr. Jonathan Djanogly, dated 20 January 2004:

As Jobcentre Plus is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question concerning the number of full time staff working for Jobcentre Plus in Cambridgeshire over the last three years. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I am only able to give you staffing figures from April 2002 as this was when Jobcentre Plus was launched.

As you will understand staffing during the year fluctuates for business reasons. Since April 2002 the number of full time staff has ranged from 374 to 433 with the total staffing levels ranging from 474 to 560 full time equivalents. Currently we have 433 full time staff working in Cambridgeshire, with 166 part-time staff. This equates to a total full time equivalent of 543 staff.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the arrangements for ensuring the quality and relevance of mandatory work-focused courses for jobseeker's allowance claimants. [145814]

Mr. Browne: Mandatory work-focused training for jobseeker's allowance claimants is purchased through regionally based Jobcentre Plus contracting teams, in consultation with district partners. Provision is delivered through private and not for profit providers and, during development, consideration is given to the recruitment needs of local employers and the training requirements of JSA claimants.

Providers are subject to thorough contractual and quality audits. Individual contract reviews are conducted by Jobcentre Plus field contracts managers and district programme quality management teams. Reviews assess the administration, delivery, quality and propriety of the provisions being delivered against the requirements set out in providers' contracts.

In addition, the Adult Learning Inspectorate in England and ESTYN in Wales, play a pivotal role in the quality assurance of provision, under the provisions of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. All inspection under the provisions of the Act is carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework. The framework focuses on the learner, and on evaluating the effectiveness of education and training in meeting all learners' needs.

Minimum Income Guarantee

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average change in income has been for pensioners in Chorley since the introduction of the minimum income guarantee. [148495]

Malcolm Wicks: The information requested is not available.

The average income support award to pensioners in Chorley was £52.45 in August 1998, when 2,500 pensioner households were receiving income support. Under Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), which was introduced in April 1999, there were 2,700 pensioner households in Chorley receiving an average of £49.47 a week in MIG in August 2003.

In December 2003 there were 3,064 pensioner households receiving an average of £40.08 a week Pension Credit in Chorley.

Following the introduction of Pension Credit in October 2003, some elements of the support previously provided through MIG are now provided through local authority funding for people in care homes, and through tax credits for children. In addition, average Pension Credit awards are expected to be lower than MIG because a savings credit of up to £14.79 (single) or £19.20 (couples) is available for people with modest incomes above the guarantee level who previously received nothing from MIG.

As at 31 December, the average level of weekly gain shared by the 1.44 million households now receiving more money as a result of Pension Credit introduction is £10.80.

Notes:

1. MIG caseload figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred and are expressed in thousands, weekly amounts to the nearest penny.
2. MIG figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample, and are therefore subject to a degree of sampling variation.

Pension Credit

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Chorley have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received pension credit; and what the average consequent change in income per pensioner is. [148496]

Malcolm Wicks: At 31 December 2003 there were 3,064 pensioner households (3,659 individuals) in the Chorley constituency receiving Pension Credit. Information on the number of Pension Credit applications in individual constituencies is not available. The average weekly rate of Pension Credit awards in Chorley is £40.08. Information on the average amount gained by pensioners in individual constituencies, since

the introduction of Pension Credit, will become available following publication of the November 2003 Quarterly Statistical Enquiry on 17 March 2004.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the total amount spent on pension credit in Warrington, North constituency has been since its introduction. [148251]

Malcolm Wicks: The latest departmental information suggests that between 1 October 2003 and 30 November 2003 an estimated £1.2 million was spent on pension credit in Warrington, North.

Notes:

1. Pension credit was introduced on 6 October 2003, therefore this figure includes five days of expenditure on the minimum income guarantee (the benefit pension credit replaces).
2. This figure is based on total expenditure on pension credit in Great Britain (GB) from the departmental Programme Accounting Computer System (PACS) data. The constituency level expenditure is estimated using 100 per cent. Generalised Matching Service (GMS) data.
3. This estimate has been rounded to the nearest £100,000.

Direct Payment

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on what date pensions were credited to the Post Office card accounts of pensioners who would normally have collected their pensions on 29 December 2003; and if he will make a statement. [149516]

Mr. Pond: The Department arranged that where customers were due payments on 29 December 2003, the customers would have pensions credited to Post Office card accounts on 24 December 2003.

Pensions Bill

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he expects to publish the Pensions Bill announced in the Queen's Speech. [149303]

Malcolm Wicks: The Pensions Bill announced in the Queen's Speech will be published as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Regulations (Consultation)

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of regulations introduced by the Department have been subject to a consultation period of less than 12 weeks since the introduction of the Code of Practice on Consultations. [142485]

Mr. Browne: The Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Written Consultation came into effect on 1 January 2001. The Department for Work and Pensions came into being in June 2001. In the period 1 June 2001 to 31 December 2002, DWP has published 22 consultations under the code, of which three were less than 12 weeks. 11 consultations have led to regulation. Four others have informed the Green Paper "Simplicity, security and choice—working and saving for retirement" from which further regulatory activity is under consideration.

The Health and Safety Executive has been sponsored by DWP since 24 July 2002. Up until 31 December 2003 there have been 13 consultations of which four are still open; all but one meeting the 12-week timescale. The one consultation that did not meet the 12-week minimum did not pertain to regulations. Information on which consultations lead to regulation is not held in a separate register but is kept on the consultations page on the HSE website.

Winter Fuel Payments

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in what forums he is advertising the availability of winter fuel payments. [147770]

Malcolm Wicks: In order to promote the availability of winter fuel payments a series of advertisements were placed in national and regional press and consumer magazines, a variety of promotional products were also made available to support the campaign. The following items were produced:

"Your Guide to Winter Fuel Payments 2003"—An A5 leaflet available in English, Welsh, Braille, Audiocassette and Large Print. This leaflet was translated into Punjabi, Chinese, Gujarati, Vietnamese, Somali, Arabic, Bengali and Urdu, electronic versions were made available via the Pension Service and DWP websites;

A3 and A4 promotional posters displaying the 'Winter Fuel Payments are on their way' and 'Don't miss out' messages; and leaflet dispenser.

Products were made widely available to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff, the media, advisers and the general public. Mailings were sent to over 30,000 relevant advisory organisations such as welfare rights groups and libraries; Citizens Advice; Age Concern; National Pensioners Convention; and the Local Government Association.

Leaflets and posters were displayed in: post office branches; doctors surgeries; Gala Bingo branches; Co-op/Alldays stores; Lloyds Pharmacy; the Pension Service (pension credit) truck; and Paypoint and Payzone outlets.

Copies of the leaflet were distributed direct to customer groups by: Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), meals on wheels scheme; St. Vincent de Paul Society; Powergen Warm Front and Stay Warm advisers.

Promotional material was sent to the National Energy Action team to support Warm Homes week, which took place in November 2003.

Leaflets and posters were sent as part of a DWP mailing targeted at care and residential homes throughout the UK in October 2003.

Promotional products were made available at a consumer event organised by *Yours* magazine.

Leaflets were available to order via the Department of Health's Winter Warmth Advice Line.

The Pension Service website (www.thepensionservice.gov.uk) was heavily utilised throughout the 2003–04 winter fuel payments campaign. Customers were signposted to the dedicated winter fuel payments section of the website through all promotional literature. Winter fuel leaflets were available for customers to download from the Pension Service resource centre.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the outcome was of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 17 to 18 December; what the Government's stance was on the issues discussed, including its voting record; and if she will make a statement. [145518]

Margaret Beckett: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I represented the United Kingdom at a meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels on 17 December. The Scottish and Northern Irish Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Fisheries were also present.

The Council agreed by qualified majority a Regulation providing for the total allowable catches for fish stocks for 2004. Important increases in quota for haddock and nephrops were agreed subject to special licensing and control conditions (those for nephrops to be developed by the end of next February). Annex V of the Regulation provides for limits on fishing time in 2004 for vessels which can catch cod, which operate in the North Sea and west of Scotland waters (as for 2003) and for the first time for vessels in the Irish Sea and the eastern English Channel. Annex VI introduces an effort management scheme for the North Sea sandeel fishery, for which the Regulation also sets significantly reduced quotas.

The Council also agreed by qualified majority a long term recovery plan for cod stocks, setting a mechanism for deciding on multiannual catch limits, and providing for annual limits on fishing effort as in Annex V to the TAG Regulation. It explicitly enables the Council to adjust the mechanism for fishing effort during 2004 should it so wish. Finally the Council agreed the guide prices for fish species for 2004.

The Council adopted by qualified majority the Presidency's compromise text for a regulation reinforcing the current requirements regarding identification of sheep and goats. I welcomed this proposal which met the main concerns we had registered during negotiation. The arrangements take account of the unique structure of our sheep sector; and, subject to approval by the Commission, our current national sheep and goat identification system of movement tags, backed up by the animal movement licensing system, will remain until 2008; followed thereafter by the introduction of electronic ID, which we support.

The Council noted progress made in discussion of the proposal to update rules governing the welfare of animals during transport. The proposal was remitted for further official discussion, in particular as regards the establishment of maximum journey times.

The Council took note without discussion of progress on a draft regulation harmonising official controls on food and feed. A number of issues, notably the scope of regulation and the charges to be made in connection with its enforcement, remain to be settled.

The Council also took note of progress in discussion of a draft regulation setting maximum residue levels for pesticides.

There was no discussion. The Council discussed the package of proposals to reform the CAP regimes for tobacco, olive oil, cotton and hops. We reiterated our support for the Commission in extending the principles of CAP reform to these sectors but argued for greater decoupling of subsidies to the olive oil and—particularly—cotton sectors. We expressed support for full decoupling in the tobacco sector, as the Commission has proposed, and called for the shortest possible transition period. Detailed negotiation of these proposals will resume under the Irish presidency.

Under Other Business, the Italian Presidency tabled a written report outlining progress on specific hygiene rules in the animal feed sector. The Presidency also reported on progress in negotiation of a veterinary equivalence agreement with Russia. Austria pressed for early action to deal with low prices in the pigmeat sector; we and several other Member States cautioned against reliance on export refunds in this sector. We raised the problems caused for Pakistan by recent changes in the concessionary import terms applicable to Basmati rice. The Commission took note and reported that it was consulting with Pakistan and India over the latest information available on prices and varieties.

Angling

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with *(a)* British Waterways, *(b)* the British Disabled Angling Association and *(c)* the National Angling Association about the provision of greater access for disabled anglers under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 by 1 October. [148423]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Government recognise the social and recreational importance of angling and are committed to improving access for the disabled. In response to the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review Group report, the Government committed the Environment Agency to promoting angling.

The Environment Agency works with a number of national and local bodies to provide angling opportunities for all. The Agency is working closely with the British Disabled Angling Association (BDAA) to integrate disability access into its work programme.

The Agency has also encouraged the Joint Angling Governing Bodies (those organisations of the National Angling Association responsible for angling development and coaching) to work closely with the BDAA. To facilitate this co-operative work a Disability Working Group has been set up and is attended by all the main bodies involved in disabled angling and angling governance.

The Agency also works with British Waterways on a number local initiatives. British Waterways aim to incorporate facilities for disabled anglers on its existing network and is committed to ensuring that all of its new angling facilities at reservoirs and other sources of closed waters are accessible for people with disabilities.

Animal Slaughter

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she will announce the Government's policy in respect of the ritual and religious slaughter of animals. [149024]

Mr. Bradshaw *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The religious slaughter of animals without prior stunning is permitted under both EU and domestic legislation.

We are still considering our response to the recommendations in the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the welfare of red meat animals at slaughter, including the recommendation that slaughter without prior stunning should be banned in this country. We expect to issue our draft response document for public consultation within the next few weeks, but I am unable to provide an exact date at this stage. The public consultation exercise will be widely publicised. We anticipate issuing the Government's final response to the recommendations towards the middle of the year.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether there are humane methods licensed for the stunning and slaughter of animals and poultry which rely on gases to render animals unconscious prior to their slaughter. [148652]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (as amended) lay down the permitted stunning and killing methods for both red meat animals and poultry. The permitted methods have been assessed for humaneness. The use of gas mixtures is a permitted method for rendering pigs, domestic fowls and turkeys unconscious. The use of gas mixtures is actually a stun-kill method, in that the animal or bird has to remain in the gas until it is dead.

Badgers

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who owns the traps and other equipment used for badger trapping exercises carried out on behalf of the Department. [148653]

Mr. Bradshaw: The traps and other equipment used in the Randomised Badger Culling Trial are owned by Defra.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the administrative boundaries of the Krebs proactive areas necessarily coincide with the areas inhabited by badgers. [148658]

Mr. Bradshaw: The boundaries of treatment areas in which badger culling would take place were only prescribed once putative badger social group territories had been delineated. Any sett outside a trial area boundary which was associated with a social group of badgers whose territory fell within the trial area would be subject to the same treatment as the sett within the trial area (proactive or reactive culling) once allocated.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what tests have been carried out by the Department to determine whether healthy badgers have acquired or are likely to acquire infection after colonising setts left vacant as a result of clearance of TB infected badgers. [148661]

Mr. Bradshaw: It is likely that the lack of light and relatively constant temperature and humidity inside a badger sett would favour the survival of Mycobacterium bovis (the causative organism of bovine tuberculosis). However, as there is currently no effective live test for TB in badgers, it would not be possible to tell if an incoming badger was healthy when colonising a vacant sett.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what controls are imposed on the relocation of badgers which are treated by animal hospitals and sanctuaries; [148662]

(2) what controls are imposed on the relocation of badgers removed from setts. [148664]

Mr. Bradshaw: Badgers are a protected species and it is an offence to take (or attempt to take) a badger from the wild, including for the purpose of relocation elsewhere (Protection of Badgers Act 1992, s.1(1)). A person guilty of this offence is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for up to six months and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

There are certain exceptions to this offence, two of which are specifically relevant to the issue of relocating badgers. These are the treatment of injured or sick badgers, and relocations carried out under the authority of a licence.

Under section 6, a person is not guilty of an offence by reason only of:

> "(a) taking or attempting to take a badger which has been disabled otherwise than by this act and is taken or to be taken solely for the purpose of tending it;"

Like other native species, there are no specific restrictions under current law regulating where badgers are released once they have recovered from treatment. Once recovered, the badger will normally be returned to the location where it was originally found. This approach is recommended by Defra on welfare grounds due to their territorial nature, and also to avoid any risk of transmitting disease. However, there it is recognised that there are situations in which this course of action may not be feasible (particularly in the case of orphaned cubs).

A voluntary code of practice (prepared by the RSPCA, National Federation of Badgers Groups and Secret World Wildlife Rescue) provides comprehensive guidance on rehabilitating and releasing badgers. This adopts a precautionary approach aimed at protecting the welfare of badgers and critically, minimising the risk of transmitting bovine tuberculosis (TB). The code is publicly available via the internet at: http://www.badger.org.uk/action/badger-rehabilitation-protocol-contents.html

Under the code of practice, an adult badger is to be released at the exact location from which it was recovered. If this is not possible the code advises that the animal is euthanased. Badger cubs may be released at a different location. Animals to be relocated are tested for TB three times. Only badgers testing negative to all three tests are released and any animal testing positive is

euthanased. The code also requires that released badgers are permanently marked (by a tattoo or microchip) and registered.

Under section 10 of the Act, licences may be issued to permit badgers to be taken from the wild (and relocated if necessary) for a limited range of specified purposes. These include scientific investigation, preventing the spread of disease, and preventing serious damage to property. Depending on the purpose of the operation, licences are issued by either the appropriate statutory conservation agency or agricultural department (English Nature and Defra, respectively, in England).

Licences to relocate badgers are only issued if such action is clearly justified and where there is considered to be a very low risk of transmitting bovine tuberculosis (TB).

Before any badgers are released at a new location all animals must be tested three times for TB. All badgers testing positive to any of the three tests, or in contact with a badger testing positive, are euthanased.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which persons and organisations are permitted to slaughter badgers; what conditions are imposed on them; and under what circumstances badgers are allowed to be slaughtered. [148663]

Mr. Bradshaw: No persons or organisations are permitted to slaughter badgers.

Badgers are a protected species and it is an offence to kill (or attempt to kill) a badger (Protection of Badgers Act 1992 s.1(1)). A person guilty of this offence is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for up to six months and/or a fine of up to £5,000 (this applies to each badger killed).

There are certain specified exceptions to this offence under which badgers may be lawfully killed. These are summarised as follows.

Section 6—General exceptions

A person is not guilty of an offence:

where a seriously injured badger is killed or attempted to be killed as an act of mercy;

where a badger is unavoidably killed or injured as an incidental result of a lawful action; and

doing anything which is authorised under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 eg experimental procedures approved under licence to advance biological or behavioural knowledge etc.

Section 7—"Farmer's defence"

A person is not guilty of an offence by reason of killing a badger if the action was necessary for the purpose of preventing serious damage to land, crops, poultry or other form of property.

This defence cannot be relied upon if it was apparent before that time that action would prove necessary and a licence had not been applied for as soon as reasonably practicable, or where an application for such a licence had been determined.

Section 10—Licences

Licences may be granted to permit badgers to be killed for the following purposes:

scientific or educational purposes or the conservation of badgers;

preventing the spread of disease;

preventing serious damage to land, crops, poultry or any other form of property.

All licences are judged on their own merits and would be subject to compliance with conditions specified in the licence.

The exceptions, and any conditions that apply, are stated in full in the Act, which is available from Her Majesty's Stationary Office or online at: www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1992/Ukpga_19920051_en_1.htm.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under what circumstances badgers may be removed from setts; and what regulations govern such removals. [149221]

Mr. Bradshaw: Badgers are a protected species and it is an offence to remove (or attempt to remove) a badger from its sett, either forcibly (including the use of dogs) or by installing exclusion measures (such as one-way gates), or by obstructing access of a badger to its sett (Protection of Badgers Act 1992). A person guilty of any of these offences is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for up to six months and/or a fine of up to £5000.

The legislation includes provisions for the granting of licences, which, where justified, could be used to permit the removal (by exclusion) of badgers from a sett. The purposes for which licences may be issued are summarised as follows:

Science, education or conservation of badgers

Zoological collections

Ringing or marking

Development

Archaeological preservation or investigation

Investigating offences

Preventing the spread of disease

Preventing serious damage to land, crops, poultry or any other form of property

Agricultural or forestry operations

Drainage or sea defence

These purposes are described in full in the Act, which is available from Her Majesty's Stationary Office or online at: www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1992/Ukpga_19920051_en_1.htm.

All licences are judged on their own merits and would be subject to compliance with conditions specified in the licence.

Controls relating to the removal of badgers from setts where the intention is to relocate the animals elsewhere—rather than simply denying access to a particular sett—are described in the joint response to parliamentary questions 0673 2003–04 and 0675 2003–04.

Bovine TB

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the proportion of TB in cattle that arises from cattle-to-cattle spread. [148654]

Mr. Bradshaw: No such estimate has been made. In many cases, it is not possible to ascribe the source of TB infection in cattle, as the routes of transmission of *Mycobacterium bovis* (the causative agent for bovine tuberculosis) from cattle to cattle, and between environmental sources (including wildlife) and cattle, are not fully understood.

Part of the TB research programme includes investigation of the pathogenesis of *M. bovis* in cattle. In addition, a survey is underway to assess potential risk factors that may predispose herds to TB outbreaks. A preliminary analysis is set out in the Third Report of the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB.

CFCs

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many prosecutions there have been of companies that illegally supply CFCs within the UK over the last five years. [148007]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Under EC Regulation 2037/2000 on ozone depleting substances and the production and supply of CFCs, except for a very small amount for laboratory and analytical uses and essential uses, was banned in the UK and other member states from January 1995. This reduced and subsequently phased out any existing stocks of CFCs in the UK. The supply of CFCs for these uses is controlled by a licencing system, in which suppliers are given an import or export declaration. The amounts of CFCs requested by companies are also agreed in advance by member states. All import declarations are processed by Customs and Excise to ensure appropriate licences have been obtained, and no illegal imports have been detected in recent years.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how her Department is working with *(a)* other Departments, *(b)* the EU and *(c)* governments of developing countries to help them tackle their illegal CFC trade. [148008]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Within the EU, licences issued by the Commission and quotas that are agreed in advance by member states control trade in CFCs. UK Customs and Excise have a monitoring system known as CHIEF system that processes import declarations. Profiles are set against commodity codes on products that could contain a potential ozone depleting substance. Customs officers then seek clarification from my officials at Defra, when there is a potential problem with an import.

The Montreal Protocol established the Multilateral Fund to assist developing countries in their phase-out of ozone depleting substances. The UK has so far contributed over $105 million to the fund. The fund supports projects prepared by developing countries and Implementing Agencies (UNEP, UNIDO, UNDP and the World bank) aimed at phasing out ozone depleting substances. Their projects include institutional strengthening and capacity building, and also the compliance assistance programme run by UNEP. An example of activities supported by the fund are compliance with the Montreal Protocol, customs training, illegal trade information exchange and awareness raising workshops being organised by UNEP in regions such as South Asia and South East Asia. The UK has been an active member of the South Asia Network.

Fisheries

Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the yearly cod quota was, broken down by area, over the last five years; and what amounts of cod were caught in those areas in those years. [147087]

Mr. Bradshaw: The UK's cod quotas for EC waters and corresponding landings made by UK vessels for each of the last five years are given in the table.

Cod stocks in EC waters where UK has quota (tonnes live weight of fish)

		1999	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*[1]
North Sea	UK quota	55,660	34,149	20,265	20,377	10,696
[IIa(EC), IV]	Landings	33,436	27,701	19,448	18,612	9,905
West of Scotland [	UK quota	5,960	3,530	2,322	2,770	1,084
Vb(EC),VIXII, XIV]	Landings	3,487	2,654	1,845	1,788	966
Irish Sea	UK quota	2,320	950	925	1,378	612
[Vila]	Landings	1,742	835	902	1,160	514
VIIb-k, VIM, IX,	UK quota	1,870	1,740	1,287	802	554
X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EC)	Landings	1,412	1,132	1,115	740	476

[1] Landings data for 2003 are provisional at the current time

Fishing Research

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much her Department spent on fishing research in each of the last five financial years. [149140]

Mr. Bradshaw: The Department has spent the following amounts on marine fisheries research in each of the last five financial years.

	£ million
2002–03	3.37
2001–02	3.35
2000–01	3.57
1999–2000	3.07
1998–99	4.10

Flooding

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many houses in England she estimates are uninsurable owing to flood risk. [147736]

Mr. Morley: According to the Association of British Insurers (ABI), it is the intention of the insurance industry, working in partnership with the Government, that flood insurance should continue to be available to the vast majority of existing properties. As set out in the ABI's Statement of Principles[1], of the 1.9 million properties on the floodplain, flood insurance will continue to be available for all those properties defended to a minimum standard of 1 in 75, or for those properties where such defences are planned by 2007.

For other properties (currently estimated at 200,000), insurers cannot guarantee to maintain cover, but will examine the risks on a case-by-case basis, and will use their best efforts to continue to provide cover. ABI believes that nearly all homes are insurable to a degree, provided appropriate local action is taken to protect the property, e.g., use of flood resilient design, accredited protection products, and temporary defences. However, the insurance industry has signalled that inappropriate new developments in the floodplain are unlikely to be able to secure insurance cover.

[1] www.abi.org.uk/Display/File/78/Statement_of_Principles.doc

Greyhounds (Welfare)

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to improve the welfare of racing greyhounds; and if she will make a statement. [149418]

Mr. Bradshaw: We are considering a range of possible measures under the proposed Animal Welfare Bill to improve greyhound welfare with the racing industry and welfare organisations.

Indigenous Flora

Rob Marris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps her Department is taking to encourage the planting of local, indigenous flora. [145099]

Mr. Bradshaw: The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), one of the main outcomes of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, aims to ensure the conservation of biodiversity, its sustainable use, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. As part of the Government's commitment to the CBD the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was published in 1994. The UK BAP sets targets for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the UK and individual action plans have now been published for 391 species and 45 habitats of conservation importance, including for 75 flowering plants.

With regard to payment of grants under the Defra agri-environment schemes, we encourage the use of native and local provenance seed as far as possible. Detailed guidance is provided in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme Handbook. For instance, when re-creating grassland on cultivated land the species of grass used should be from a specified list of species and of native and local provenance. If applicants have problems in obtaining native seed or stock they are advised to discuss other options with their stewardship advisor. In some circumstances alternative seed mixes may be agreed and wild flower seed may be added.

There is also a specific stewardship payment which helps meet the cost of buying in seed. However, to qualify for this payment the seed must be native seed of local provenance. Similarly with tree and hedge planting and management, Countryside Stewardship agreement holders are required to use stock of native and local provenance where possible. Where this is not possible alternative options are to be discussed with the Stewardship Adviser. As regards EU legislation on accredited sources of seed for trees and the production of locally sourced plants, on 1 January 2003 the Forestry Commission brought in the Forest Reproductive Material (Great Britain) Regulations 2002, implementing EU Directive 1999/105 on the marketing of forest reproductive material. These regulations increase the number of species controlled by law to 46 species and the genus "Populus". This includes 15 tree species which are native to Great Britain. The regulations are deliberately structured in a way to encourage the collection of local seed. Sellers of planting stock are required to issue a supplier's document to the buyer, setting out whether or not the stock is locally sourced.

In addition, for native species not controlled by law, the Forestry Commission promotes the harvesting of local seed from native trees and shrubs through the Voluntary Scheme for the Certification of Native Trees and Shrubs. Further details of this scheme can be found on the Forestry Commission's website at: http://forestry.gov.uk/frm

In July this year we published the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate which set new targets to measure progress made to protect and improve biodiversity on the Government Estate. They include a target to assess and improve the condition of Government owned Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); a requirement for all Government Departments who own sites of significant biodiversity interest to produce Biodiversity Action Plans; and a requirement to set a biodiversity target in contracts for new and refurbished Government buildings. The guidance which accompanies the targets encourages Departments, when renewing maintenance contracts, to consider building in clauses on the purchase/planting of native species of plants.

In 2001, recognising concerns that present arrangements for handling issues relating to non-native species were insufficient, Defra commissioned a Review of Non-native species policy. A range of organisations was represented on the working group, and its report was published in March 2003. The issues which it raises are complex, and a combination of measures will be required to address these. The report highlighted problems with non-native genotypes and recommended that there was a need to raise public awareness of this issue.

The Government have published their initial response to the report and are carrying out a consultation exercise with the aim of developing a framework for dealing with

invasive non-native species. Details of the consultation can be found at http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/nnspecies-policy/index.htm

Rob Marris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of trees planted by local authorities she requires to be native; and what steps is she taking to ensure that this requirement is met. [145100]

Phil Hope: I have been asked to reply.

The Government place no such requirement on local authorities. We encourage the planting of the appropriate trees in appropriate places and authorities are advised to choose species which are suitable for their intended purpose, whether for screening, shade, ornamentation, landscape character or wildlife habitat. The soil and conditions prevailing on the site are also important considerations in species selection.

Joint Environmental Markets Unit

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to change the responsibilities of the Joint Environmental Markets Unit. [144574]

Mr. Morley: DTI and Defra's Joint Environmental Markets Unit (JEMU), part of DTI's Business Group, aims to increase the UK's share of domestic and global markets for environmental goods and services. In response to the Environmental Goods and Services Innovation and Growth Team report of 2002, the Government are expanding JEMU to promote innovation in the environmental goods and services industry.

The Government have decided to transfer responsibility for JEMU's international trade promotion work to UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) to form a dedicated Environment Sector unit in UKTI. This will bring arrangements for promoting the UK environmental goods and services industry overseas, in line with those for most other industry sectors, and build on the current close working between JEMU and UKTI. The Business Group and UKT&I units will continue to work closely together and there will continue to be close involvement of Defra and DTI in the work of both units.

Kyoto Targets

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information she has collated about compliance with the Kyoto agreement targets by EU member states; and what instruments are available to the Commission to ensure that these targets are met. [147741]

Mr. Morley: The European Union and its member states agreed to a target under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8 per cent. below base year levels by 2008–12. The EU and its member states have agreed to meet their commitments jointly and, under a burden-sharing arrangement, the EU target has been redistributed between member states to reflect their national circumstances, requirements for economic growth, and the scope for further emission reductions.

Under the provisions of the Monitoring Mechanism Decision (Council Decision 93/389/EEC as amended by Decision 99/296/EC), member states are required to report annually to the Commission on their anthropogenic emissions of the six greenhouse gases covered by the Kyoto Protocol and on their national projections for emissions of these gases.

The European Commission uses this information to assess annually, whether the actual and projected progress of member states is sufficient to ensure fulfilment of the EU's and member states' commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. The latest progress report, published in December last year, provides data for members states' emissions in 2001, and their projected emissions for 2010. That report notes that the EU had cut its total emissions to 2.3 per cent. below base year levels and that aggregate member states' "with existing measures" projections suggest that in 2010 EU emissions will have decreased by 0.5 per cent. leaving a gap of 7.5 per cent. from the Kyoto target. Eleven member states have identified additional policies and measures to achieve their commitments under the burden-sharing agreement. Taking into account these "with additional measures" projections shows that six member states—Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Sweden and the UK—would over-achieve their individual commitments. The over-achievement by those member states would result in emissions reductions for the EU as a whole of 7.2 per cent. below base year emissions.

The performance of the individual member states in 2001 and where they project their emissions will be in 2010 are set out in the following table.

Member states Kyoto Protocol (burden-sharing) targets compared with emissions projections to 2010

	Percentage of base year emissions		*In percentage of base year emissions*	
	Emissions target for 2008–12 under EU burden-sharing agreement	*Change of emissions in 2001 compared with base year*	*Gap between burden-sharing target and projected emissions in 2010 based on existing policies and measures*	*Gap between burden-sharing target and projected emissions in 2010 based on both existing and additional policies and measures*
Austria	-13.0	9.6	24.5	5.7
Belgium	-7.5	6.3	22.9	13.4
Denmark	-21.0	-0.2	37.8	35.1
Finland	0.0	4.7	16.5	-0.5
France	0.0	0.4	9.5	-1.2
Germany	-21.0	-18.3	1.3	[1]
Greece	25.0	23.5	10.7	-0.8
Ireland	13.0	31.1	26.8	-0.3
Italy	-6.5	7.1	10.2	3.1
Luxembourg	-28.0	-44.2	5.6	[1]
Netherlands	-6.0	4.1	12.1	10.7
Portugal	27.0	36.4	14.0	[1]
Spain	15.0	32.1	33.3	13.0
Sweden	4.0	-3.3	-3.3	[1]
UK	-12.5	-12.0	-1.4	-10.0
EU total	-8.0	-2.3	7.5	0.8

[1] No data provided

The "with existing measures" projections only consider the policies and measures currently implemented, while the "with additional measures" projections also take those policies and measures into account which are under discussion and have a realistic

chance of implementation. Neither set of projections, however, take into account the effects from several policies and measures being developed under the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP), particularly the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, which is due to be start in 2005 and has the potential to deliver substantial additional emission cuts.

The Government consider that placing the responsibility on member states to take the necessary action so that they meet their burden sharing targets is the best way of ensuring that the EU meets its target under the Kyoto Protocol. They will therefore support the European Commission's efforts to ensure that member states implement the policies and measures set out in the European Climate Change Programme fully and effectively.

Under the new Monitoring Mechanism Decision, which will replace Decision 93/389/EEC, member states must, following the completion of the review of their national inventories, retire allowances (assigned amount units, removal units, emission reduction units and certified emission reductions) equivalent to their net emissions during that year for each year of the Kyoto Protocol's five year commitment period. This requirement to retire allowances annually means that member states are obliged systematically to take steps to comply with their targets over a number of years. It will give early notice of any difficulties arising where member states are not likely to have sufficient allowances to cover their emissions over the full commitment period and so will need to take further action to reduce their emissions or to acquire allowances from other Parties to the Protocol that have a surplus.

Where member states fail to comply with obligations arising under EC law with respect to emissions reductions, the European Commission may bring proceedings against them under Article 226 of the EC Treaty. Moreover, in the event that a member state fails to comply with a judgment of the European Court of Justice, the Commission may take further action under Article 228, which could result in the imposition of fines. Member states' commitments under the burden-sharing agreement may therefore be enforced by legal action resulting in sanctions.

North Kent Marshes

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to remove the special landscape area designation for the North Kent Marshes, with particular reference to Elmley; and if she will make a statement. [148726]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Elmley is in the North Kent Marshes Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), which was first designated in 1993. The ESA contains grazing marsh habitat that is internationally important for over-wintering and breeding birds and there are no plans to remove the ESA designation which has been successful in safeguarding these interests. New agri-environment schemes are being developed so that we can build on these achievements and enhance biodiversity.

Plant Passports

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many plants have been imported without passports in each year since passports were introduced. [149260]

Mr. Bradshaw: The plant passporting regime applies to certain plants and plant products known to host the most serious ("quarantine") pests and diseases. It applies only for movements within the European Community and there are no border checks carried out, although spot checks may take place anywhere in the trade chain. Producers of such material are required to be officially registered and be subject to official inspection at least annually in order to be authorised to issue plant passports.

There are no data available either on the number of consignments received in the UK for which a plant passport has been issued by a producer, or the number of consignments received for which a passport is not required. EU legislation does not require such information to be recorded, although those despatching and receiving passported material must maintain records to facilitate monitoring and enforcement.

In cases where official monitoring detects that a plant passport is missing on a plant or product covered by the passporting requirements, enforcement action is taken. This involves notification of the plant health authorities in the member state in which the material originated, as well as the return or destruction of the material.

Sudden Oak Death

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment has been made of using helicopters for the purpose of identifying trees infected with sudden oak death; and if she will make a statement. [148557]

Mr Bradshaw: It would not be possible to spot signs of infection of Phytophthora ramorum from the air unless infection and dieback of trees and shrubs was extensive. The employment of helicopters would therefore only be of assistance to identify areas of dense planting and woodland for further investigation in areas where the infection is considerably more severe than any of the UK outbreaks identified to date. Plant health inspectors already have access to an on-line aerial photograph mapping facility to assist them in planning ground based inspections. They also have experience of using aerial surveys to detect plant disease on arable crops, although this has been with fixed wing aircraft rather than helicopters. The possibility of aerial surveys will be kept under review.

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment has been made of the effects of using methyl bromide as the fungicide of choice for combating sudden oak death; and if she will make a statement. [148558]

Mr Bradshaw: Methyl bromide is a fumigant approved for use as a pre-planting soil sterilant against some soil borne diseases including some Phytophthora species mainly in horticultural situations. Its effectiveness specifically against Phytopthora ramorum has not been evaluated because this is a new species. The

pesticide may already be used by nursery staff growing plant stock for the purpose of eradicating other known pests and diseases in soil pre-planting. However it is not approved for use against fungal pathogens on growing plants due to phytotoxicity problems caused by the high doses that would be necessary. The methodology of applying soil fumigants would also make it impracticable to use this a means of dealing with infection in the wider environment. There are considerable health and safety implications attached to the use of this acutely toxic substance.

The only form of treatment currently available to eliminate infection by Phytophthora ramorum is removal and destruction of plant material. Currently approved fungicides have a suppressive effect which masks symptoms rather than eradicating the pathogen from infected plants. However, Horticulture Development Council funded research at the Central Science Laboratory is looking at a range of substances to see how well they can eradicate infection or protect healthy nursery stock from new infection.

US Ships (Decommissioning)

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the US ships intended for decommissioning by Able UK contain chemicals banned in the US. [142022]

Mr. Morley: The US Toxic Substances Control Act generally prohibits the export of PCBs greater in concentration that 50 ppm although an enforcement discretion permitted the export of PCBs above this concentration on the condition that all liquid or easily accessible PCBs were removed beforehand. We understand that all such PCBs were removed as part of the contractual obligations between the US Maritime Administration and Able UK Ltd.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the High Court ruling on 8 December regarding the dismantling of the contaminated former US naval ships. [143988]

Mr. Morley: No. Defra were not a party in the case and it is possible that parties will appeal against the decision. The ships are not contaminated any more or less than any similar ship of their age. To describe them as such is misleading.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Freedom of Information

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what recent steps the Department has taken to promote *(a)* freedom of information, *(b)* data protection and *(c)* human rights. [146674]

Mr. Lammy: Details of the steps taken to promote freedom of information in the last year are included in the annual report on bringing into force those provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which are not yet fully in force. This was laid before both Houses on 27 November 2003 and copies have been placed in the Library. The Department has also produced a model action plan to assist public authorities in their preparations for implementation of the Freedom of Information Act which includes sections on raising awareness of freedom of information with staff, stakeholders and the public. Copies are available from the Department and its website.

The Department has regular meetings with the Information Commissioner, who has statutory responsibility for promoting the observance of the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 by data controllers and for disseminating information to the public about the operation of the Act. The Information Commissioner also has responsibility for the promotion of awareness and compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. Both the Commissioner and the Department keep under review the operation of the Data Protection Act and closely monitor and contribute to the development of international initiatives in the data protection field.

Officials at the Department have delivered eight awareness raising roadshows on human rights in the past year. The delivery of roadshows is on-going and with further dates already confirmed in Leeds and Oxford.

The Department maintains a dedicated human rights helpdesk to assist members of the public and produces publications including a detailed "Study Guide to the Human Rights Act 1998", a leaflet entitled "An introduction to the Human Rights Act," which is available in nine different languages, plus an audio tape and a copy of the study guide in braille. The officials are also in the process of commissioning CD- ROM guidance on the Act, a further edition of the study guide and special guidance for those with learning disabilities. The Department's human rights website attracts praise from a number of key stakeholders , and receive an average of 1,150 hits per week.

The Department provides assistance to the Institute for Global Ethics and Citizenship Foundation in delivering the Impetus Project—encouraging children across the UK to learn about human rights as part of their citizenship education.

I have written in my capacity as Minister for Human Rights to each Council Leader and Public Authority Chief Executive in England and Wales—enclosing a copy of an Audit Commission report on human rights. The Act can be a valuable tool for driving up standards of public service delivery.

I am keen to ensure that the Department takes advantage of every opportunity to speak on human rights.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Building Regulations

David Taylor: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the system for ensuring compliance with the building regulations in the construction of new houses. [148880]

Phil Hope: A person intending to build a new house must either apply to the local authority's building control department or they must engage an inspector approved under Part II of the Building Act 1984. The local authority or the approved inspector will then check the plans and the building work for compliance with the Building Regulations.

David Taylor: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what recent representations he has received from the Building Control Performance Standards Advisory Group; [148973]

(2) what recent discussions he has had with the Building Control Performance Standards Advisory Group on the effect competition has had on standards in building control. [148974]

Phil Hope: No recent discussions have taken place with the Building Control Performance Standards Advisory Group nor has the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister received any representations from them. The Group are welcome to raise with me, at any time, any matters relating to standards in building control.

Mr. Todd: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his Answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 142W, on the fenestration self-assessment scheme, how large the sample of work monitored to ensure compliance with building regulations is; and if he will publish the report on compliance. [148978]

Phil Hope: The Fenestration Self-Assessment Scheme (FENSA) routinely monitors annually 1 per cent. of the work of its member firms, with a minimum of two inspections per year. Where an inspection shows that the work has not complied, the rate of inspection for that firm will be increased. Extra inspections are also carried out in response to complaints that work does not comply. Local authorities retain their right to inspect work carried out by registered FENSA installers and to take enforcement action against them where appropriate. Local authorities will use these powers in response to a complaint.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's report on compliance is available on the ODPM website. Copies are also available in the Libraries of the House.

Sue Doughty: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he will publish the results of studies into pressure testing of homes to assess whether requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations are being fully implemented. [149364]

Phil Hope: The current requirements in Part L for the airtightness of new homes came into effect on 1 April 2002. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will publish the results of pressure tests on a sample of new homes built to these standards in support of the consultation on the proposals for the next major revision of Part L, planned for this summer.

Fire Service College

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the impact of the Airfield Support Services Project on Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh. [149054]

Phil Hope: The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has not yet made a decision on the Airfield Support Services Project. The possibility of joint working with the MoD on airfield support fire service training is warmly welcomed by the Fire Service College and is being taken into account in its strategic planning process.

Local Authority Debt

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) which local authorities in England are operating on a debt-free status; [148705]

(2) what steps his Department is taking to protect the debt-free status of local authorities; [148706]

(3) how much funding derived from capital receipts has been transferred by his Department in each of the last five years from debt-free local authorities to Metropolitan local authorities; [148707]

(4) if he will end the transfer of funding derived from capital receipts from debt-free local authorities to Metropolitan local authorities. [148708]

Mr. Raynsford: The table below lists the 134 local authorities that had debt-free status as of 30 September 2003:

It was formerly our practice to take into account local authorities' capital receipts when issuing the credit approvals which allow them to borrow. That ended in April 2003. No estimates are available of the resources thereby redistributed from debt-free authorities to metropolitan authorities.

The redistribution of resources remains a fundamental principle of the housing finance system. It is currently achieved by the requirement for authorities to set aside for debt redemption part of their housing capital receipts. Debt-free authorities are exempt and have thus enjoyed an advantage unavailable to others, but that anomaly will be corrected from 1 April this year, when set-aside is replaced by pooling, under which all authorities must pay part of their housing capital receipts to the Government. Transitional measures will protect debt-free authorities from the full impact of this new redistribution mechanism for three years. Thereafter they will be treated on the same basis as authorities with debt. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister consider that the recently introduced the new prudential framework for local authority borrowing and authorities who need to borrow and can afford to do so should not be deterred by artificial incentives to remain free of debt.

Local authorities who have reported that they have 'debt free status' as at 30 September 2003

Ashford
Aylesbury Vale
Babergh
Barking & Dagenham
Basingstoke & Deane
Bath & North East Somerset
Bedford
Bracknell Forest
Breckland
Bridgnorth
Broadland
Bromley
Bromsgrove

Broxbourne
Cambridge
Chelmsford
Cherwell
Chichester
Chiltern
Christchurch
City of London
Congleton
Corby
Cotswold
Crawley
Dacorum
Dartford
Daventry
East Cambridgeshire
East Devon
East Dorset
East Hampshire
East Lindsey
East Northamptonshire
Eastleigh
Eden
Elmbridge
Epping Forest
Epsom & Ewell
Erewash
Exeter
Forest Heath
Fylde
Guildford
Hambleton
Harlow
Hart
Havant
Hertsmere
Horsham
Huntingdonshire
Kennet
Lichfield
Macclesfield
Maldon
Malvern Hills
Mendip
Mid Bedfordshire
Mid Sussex
Mole Valley
Newcastle-under-Lyme
North Devon
North Dorset
North Wiltshire
Penwith
Redditch
Reigate & Banstead
Rother
Runnymede
Rushcliffe
Rushmoor
Ryedale
Salisbury
Sevenoaks
Shrewsbury & Atcham
South Bucks
South Cambridgeshire
South Hams
South Lakeland
South Northamptonshire
South Oxfordshire
South Shropshire
South Somerset
South Staffordshire
Spelthorne
St. Albans
St. Edmundsbury
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stevenage
Stratford-on-Avon
Suffolk Coastal
Surrey Heath
Swale
Tandridge
Tewkesbury
Three Rivers
Tonbridge & Malling
Tunbridge Wells
Tynedale
Uttlesford
Vale Royal
Vale of White Horse
Watford
Waverley
Wellingborough
Welwyn Hatfield
West Berkshire UA
West Devon
West Dorset
West Lindsey
West Oxfordshire
West Wiltshire
Winchester
Windsor & Maidenhead
Woking
Worthing
Wychavon
Wycombe
Wyre
Wyre Forest
Dorset police authority
Kent police authority
Suffolk police authority
Sussex police authority
Wiltshire police authority
Dartmoor national park authority
Exmoor national park authority
Lake District national park
North York Moors national park authority
Northumberland national park authority
Peak national park authority
The Broads Authority
Yorkshire Dales national park authority
North London waste authority

For the purpose of this table, an authority is 'debt-free' only if:

(a) at 31 March 2003, the authority's credit ceiling was nil or a negative amount and

(b) at 30 September 2003, the authority had no money outstanding by way of external borrowing other than short-term borrowing or hard to redeem debt, as defined in Regulation 154 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance) Regulations 1997.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether his policy of requiring councils to submit proposals for disposing of their housing stock by July 2005 applies to *(a)* all councils and *(b)* only those councils unable to meet decent housing targets; how many councils have so far had applications for disposal of their housing stock accepted; what steps he is taking to ensure that the rest apply; how many proposals have been rejected by tenants' ballots; and how local authorities whose tenants reject proposals in ballots are to be helped to reach the decent housing targets. [148066]

Yvette Cooper: All local authorities must produce a robust stock appraisal by July 2005, which must be signed off by the relevant Government Office of the Region. Where that process identifies that additional investment is required to meet the decent homes target, local authorities can choose from three options singly or in combination: set up a high performing Arms Length Housing Management Organisation (ALMO); pursue a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme; and transfer housing to one or more housing associations.

Since April 2001, 29 local authorities have transferred whole or part of their stock and 11 transfers have not proceeded because tenants have voted against the proposal.

The option appraisal process is designed to ensure that tenants are involved in the decision making process from the start and that they are fully informed about the scale of the task in delivering decent homes.

Where there is a no vote it is for the authority and tenants to re-examine the options that are available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he will make a statement on *(a)* the local government finance settlement, *(b)* the supported borrowing allocation for capital spend and *(c)* the Supporting People grant notification for 2004–05. [148809]

Mr. Raynsford: Announcements on these issues will be made shortly.

Regional Government

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his answer of 7 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 399–400W, elected regional assembly for Yorkshire and the Humber, if he will place in the Library the evidence upon which his assertion was based. [149691]

Yvette Cooper: The Government are committed to promoting economic growth in Yorkshire and the Humber and an elected regional assembly is very much part of this framework. An elected assembly would clearly bring greater democratic accountability to the region because, for the first time, activities which are currently carried out by central government, its agencies and quangos, would become the responsibility of a democratically elected regional assembly. However it will be a matter of choice for the regional electorate as to whether they wish to have an elected regional assembly.

The White Papers "Your Region, Your Choice" and "Our Fire and Rescue Service" are already available in the Library of the House and fully set out our proposals for the regional responsibilities of elected regional assemblies, including the economic arguments, in favour.

Supporting People Programme

Mr. David Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the operation of the Supporting People programme. [149083]

Yvette Cooper: The Supporting People programme which went live on 1 April 2003 provides housing related support services for more than 1 million vulnerable people—including the homeless, women fleeing domestic violence and older people—to live independently in their accommodation.

The programme introduced an integrated planning and funding framework for housing related support services.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on funding for the Supporting People programme in its first year of operation; and what its estimated budget is for the next two years. [149084]

Yvette Cooper: Last October, the Government issued a written statement in the Houses of Parliament announcing funding of £1.8 billion for the first year of the Supporting People programme in England.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be making an announcement about 2004–05 funding shortly.

An announcement for 2005–06 funding will be made in the summer.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Alcohol Misuse

David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives the Government plan to reduce the harm associated with alcohol misuse; and if he will make a statement. [148796]

Ms Blears: The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit published an interim analytical report on the harms associated with alcohol misuse on 19 September 2003. This report identifies the following broad areas for policy interventions: education, information and communication; supply and pricing; health and treatment services; the community safety and criminal justice. The findings of this report have been used to inform development of the Government's alcohol harm reduction strategy, which will be published shortly.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the stakeholder forum on the care and use of primates in experiments will be set up; what the terms of reference will be; who will be included on the forum; and when it will report. [146169]

Caroline Flint: Establishment of a stakeholder forum to consider issues relating to the use of non-human primates in scientific procedures was recommended in the report by the Animal Procedures Committee (APC) "The Use of Primates under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986".

This recommendation was accepted, and a forum has accordingly been set up. It will meet on 9 January. It has no formal terms of reference. Its principal task is to consider other recommendations in the APC's report. The aim is to hold an informed debate that will assist preparation of a ministerial response to the issues that the ARC has raised.

Attendance at the forum is by invitation only. Invitees include a broad range of organisations with practical experience of the use of primates in scientific procedures, as well as those from funding and regulatory organisations and other Government Departments.

A report of the forum's meeting and conclusions will be placed on the Home Office and ARC websites as soon as it is available.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the feasibility of implementing the recommendations in the House of Lords report on the use of animals in scientific procedures; and if he will make a statement. [147328]

Caroline Flint: The Home Office has not commissioned, or evaluated, any formal research into the feasibility of implementing the recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures, published in July 2002. The Government's response to the Select Committee's report was published on 20 January 2003 (Cm 5729). Copies have been placed in the Library.

The Government welcomed the Select Committee's report and noted in particular, and endorsed, its finding that animal experiments are currently necessary to develop human and veterinary medicines and to protect humans and the environment.

We also reaffirmed our commitment to the fullest possible application of the 3Rs—the refinement of scientific procedures, the reduction in the numbers of animals used and their replacement wherever possible—and to greater openness regarding the use of animals in scientific procedures, subject to safeguards for personal and confidential information.

We were unable to accept four of the Select Committee's recommendations (numbers 15, 19, 23 and 27). These related to the inspection of establishments, the training requirement for visiting scientists and students from overseas, the requirement for lay members of local Ethical Review Processes, and the reporting of genetically modified animals which are bred but not used in the annual statistics on animal use.

We agreed, or broadly accepted, eleven recommendations (11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30 and 31). Action on these is in hand. In particular, we are currently exploring the recommendation that a United Kingdom centre for research into the 3Rs should be established. As part of this work the Chief Inspector of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate has sought the views of interested parties—primarily those who fund and undertake animal research—to gather information on the scope for such a centre.

We are also looking again at the possible streamlining of the project licence application form, and at the arrangements for publication of licensing information, through a joint project team with scientific stakeholders. I have asked for progress reports on all of these issues early in 2004. In addition, the Animal Procedures Committee has been asked to review the annual statistics publication and is due to report by the end of 2004.

One other recommendation (28), regarding the repeal of section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, has been the subject of a further period of review and consultation since publication of the Government reply. I hope to announce the outcome shortly.

The remaining eight recommendations (8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 20, 21, and 26) broadly endorsed existing Home Office policy and practice.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of licence applications under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 were *(a)* accepted without alteration, *(b)* returned for redrafting before resubmission and *(c)* rejected in the last year for which figures are available; and how many and what percentage were referred for consideration to the Animals Procedures Committee. [147407]

Caroline Flint: A feature of the regulatory regime under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 is the discussion that often takes place at an early stage between applicants (or prospective applicants) and the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate. This means that proposals unlikely to meet the Act's stringent requirements are revised or withdrawn before formal refusal becomes necessary.

Our central database records do not show all these dealings that commonly go on between applicants and individual Inspectors at various stages in the application process, and much of the requested information is therefore not readily available.

We can say that in 2002, the last year in which figures were published, one project licence application was formally refused. Over the same period, 97 project licence applications, 17 personal licence applications and one application for a certificate of designation are recorded as not proceeded with.

For additional information, paragraph 12 of Appendix A of the Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals (Great Britain) 2002 (Command 5886, available in the Library) provides the total number of project and personal licences, and certificates of designation, granted and revoked during 2002, showing how many were in force on 31 December 2002.

During 2002, a total of four project licence applications were referred to the Animals Procedures Committee for consideration. This represents 0.58 per cent. of the total project licences granted that year.

Antisocial Behaviour Orders

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many antisocial behaviour orders have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused by each magistrates bench in North Wales since their introduction. [148492]

Ms Blears: A total of 16 notifications have been received by the Home Office, of Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) granted within North Wales, up to 30 September 2003 (latest available). Of this total, 15 have been issued within magistrates courts, details of which are given in the table, and, following implementation of the Police Reform Act (December 2002), one ASBO has been given by the Crown court at Mold (North Wales and Chester Crown court group). No notifications have been received of ASBOs refused in North Wales.

The number of notifications of ASBOs issued within North Wales, as reported to the Home Office, up to 30 September 2003, by magistrates court.

Magistrates court	*Total issued*
Conwy psa	3
Flintshire psa	3
Gwynedd psa	2
Wrexham Maelor psa	7

Immigration

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many meetings he has had with hon. Members about immigration cases in the last 12 months. [145415]

Mr. Blunkett: The Minister of State with responsibility for immigration, my right hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Beverley Hughes) regularly meets hon. Members to discuss particular immigration cases.

Asylum

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will define the circumstances in which it would be in the interests of children of asylum seekers to separate them from their parents. [142767]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 8 December 2003]:* The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Bill does not change in any way the grounds on which children may be taken into care. The Government's policy remains to ensure that families whose asylum claims have failed are removed together. Where there are difficulties or delays with enforced removal, but families have been provided with opportunities to return voluntarily and at no cost to themselves, the Bill provides that families who refuse these opportunities would no longer be entitled to support at the expense of the taxpayer. If parents fail to take these opportunities to leave and put their children at risk, it would be for the local authority to decide how the interests of their children should be protected under existing child protection legislation.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many unaccompanied child asylum seekers arrived at Gatwick in each of the last three years; and how many of them are registered in care; [144994]

(2) how many unaccompanied child asylum seekers have presented themselves at UK ports of entry in each of the last six years. [141057]

Beverley Hughes: Data on the number of asylum seekers without documentation claiming to be minors that arrive at specific ports of entry are not recorded and collated centrally. This information could therefore be obtained from individual case files only at disproportionate cost.

Information on asylum statistics is published quarterly on the Home Office website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were allowed to enter the United Kingdom as political or religious refugees from Somalia during 2003. [148071]

Beverley Hughes: The number of Somali men and women allowed to enter the United Kingdom as political or religious refugees during 2003 is not currently available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual case records.

Information on asylum applications and decisions by gender and nationality is published annually. The annual publication for 2003 will be available at the end of August 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate web site at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Cannabis

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policies to tackle cannabis abuse. [148603]

Caroline Flint: The Government are determined to support the police in tackling the problem of drug abuse with an effective and realistic approach to drug legislation, enforcement and education. Cannabis will not be legalised or decriminalised. It is a harmful drug that will remain illegal following its reclassification as a Class C drug on 29 January.

Our drugs laws and our educational messages to young people must reflect the relative harms of drugs, in accordance with the available scientific and medical advice, if they are to be credible. Reclassification will enable a more convincing and ultimately more effective educational message to be conveyed to young people about the dangers of misusing different types of drug, including cannabis.

We are publishing information about what reclassification will mean in practice—through making a leaflet widely available to young people and through extensive radio advertising, beginning on 22 January—to ensure that the clear message that cannabis is illegal

and harmful continues to be heard. This information will feed into the three year FRANK publicity campaign to better inform people's understanding of drugs and to provide a single, easily accessible source of advice and support for those affected by drug use. This will help young people, in particular, to understand what will happen to them if they are found in possession of cannabis (or any other illegal drug) or are supplying drugs.

Reclassification also sends a clear signal to the police that the priority is Class A drugs, like heroin and crack cocaine, which do the most harm. The Association of Chief Police Officers' cannabis enforcement guidance is rightly directed at ensuring that those who cause public order problems, those who persist in misusing cannabis, and those who use cannabis close to places where children are present are dealt with appropriately. But where none of these factors apply, it is not right that someone who is an adult who is found with cannabis should take up police time.

Time saved as a consequence of policing cannabis possession offences in this way, following reclassification, will provide the police with an opportunity to focus greater resources on priority areas like tackling Class A drug supply offences.

Catapults

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of damage or injury caused by the use of catapults have been reported in each of the last five years; and how many of these cases have led to *(a)* arrest and *(b)* prosecution. [148538]

Ms Blears: The requested information is not collected centrally and could be done so only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to outlaw the sale and use of catapults; and if he will make a statement. [148541]

Ms Blears: We are not satisfied that the problem of the misuse of catapults is serious enough to merit their inclusion on the current list of prohibited weapons. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Coroners' Salaries

Vera Baird: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the salaries are of *(a)* the Cleveland Coroner, *(b)* his deputy and *(c)* his assistant deputy. [147651]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 13 January 2004]*: Coroners' salaries are agreed with the relevant local authorities and the Home Office has no information about individual salary levels. The Cleveland lead authority is Middlesbrough Borough Council and it is a matter for that authority to decide whether or not to provide the requested information.

Corporate Killing

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to introduce legislation on corporate killing. [146541]

Paul Goggins: The Government are committed to reforming the law on corporate manslaughter. We intend to publish our proposals for legislation in the near future, followed by a draft Bill in the spring.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. M. Atem; [144636]

(2) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. M. Atem; [145965]

(3) when he will reply to the letter to him dated 4 November 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. M. Atem. [147618]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to my right hon. Friend on 13 January 2004.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 1 December 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Abdul Hussain Talash. [149547]

Mr. Blunkett: I replied to my right hon. Friend on 19 January 2004.

Credit Card Fraud

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the most recent annual cost of credit card fraud. [148836]

Ms Blears: The Government do not collect figures on the cost of credit card fraud but the Association for Payment Clearing Services (APACS) assesses the cost of all plastic card fraud in 2002 (the most recent figures available) to be £424.6 million.

In April 2002, the Government launched a two-year pilot of a unique policing unit (the Dedicated Cheque and Plastic Crime Unit (DCPCU)) based in London, which works closely with the banking industry to reduce organised card and cheque fraud, using intelligence largely provided by the card industry. DCPCU had significant success in its first year including recovery of more than 4,000 cards and 525 cheques, resulting in 59 arrests. Potential savings amount to £13.35 million. DCPCU cases have so far led to 31 convictions, all following guilty pleas.

Government are actively supporting "Chip and PIN", a major finance and retail industry initiative which is the introduction of microchips into payment cards to help authentication combined with the introduction of PIN codes in place of signatures. The banking industry anticipates that, by 2005, the new Chip and PIN technology will eliminate over half of the predicted level of plastic card fraud in the UK.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to north Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146864]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146880]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to north Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146893]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible re-location of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146924]

Fiona Mactaggart: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury gave her to similar questions to his Department on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Driving Standards

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines his Department has set for the police concerning motorists *(a)* eating, *(b)* smoking and *(c)* drinking non-alcoholic drinks whilst driving. [148413]

Caroline Flint: Drivers must have proper control of their vehicles and drive carefully and safely at all times. Any motorist who fails to do so, for whatever reason, is liable to prosecution for failing to exercise proper control of a vehicle, careless or inconsiderate driving, or dangerous driving. The police will consider in each case whether eating, drinking or smoking whilst driving might amount to or contribute to the commission of one of these offences and charge accordingly. The Association of Chief Police Officers is content that the existing legislation provides sufficient powers to prosecute successfully any driving offences that may arise from distracting behaviour.

Drink-driving

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drivers failed a breath test in Lancashire in each of the last five years. [148363]

Ms Blears: Information for Lancashire from 1997 to 2001 is given in the table. Data for 2002 will be available in the spring 2004.

Number of positive or refused breath tests within Lancashire police force area, 1997–2001

	Positive/refused
1997	2,700
1998	1,900
1999	1,900
2000	1,600
2001	2,500

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of drivers failed a breath test during December in each year since 1997; [147925]

(2) how many breath tests were taken by drivers in each year since 1997; and how many accidents were caused by drunk drivers in each year since 1997. [147926]

Ms Blears: Information for England and Wales is given in the tables.

Table A—Screening breath tests and the number and percentage of positive or refused within the month of December, 1997–2001[1]—England and Wales

	Total tests	*Positive/refused*	*Percentage positive/ refused*
1997	142,900	9,100	6
1998	142,500	8,100	6
1999	120,300	8,900	7
2000	107,600	8,900	8
2001	99,100	9,000	9

[1] Figures for 2002 are not available.

Source:
Home Office

Table B—Number of screening breath tests, 1997–2001[1]—England and Wales

	Total number of breath tests
1997	800,300
1998	815,500
1999	764,500
2000	714,800
2001	623,900

[1] Figures for 2002 are not available.

Source:
Home Office

Table C—Accidents in which at least one driver provided a positive breath test or refused, 1997–2002—England and Wales

		Accident severity		
	Total number of accidents	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*
1997	7,309	131	1,609	5,569
1998	6,916	111	1,419	5,386
1999	6,982	88	1,319	5,575
2000	7,391	98	1,370	5,923
2001	7,534	98	1,433	6,003
2002	7,555	91	1,395	6,069

Source:
Department of Transport

Drug-related Crime

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the costs of drug-related crime in each year since 1997. [148605]

Caroline Flint: Estimates of the costs of drug-related crime are not available annually. However, a recent study published by the Home Office provides estimates of the total economic and social costs of Class A drug use and puts these in the range of £10.1 to £17.4 billion for the year 2000. These costs include the costs of drug-related crime, which are estimated to fall in the range £8.8 to £15.8 billion. The costs of drug-related crime include victim costs and those accruing to courts, prisons and other parts of the criminal justice system.

Durham Police Force

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the strength of the Durham police force was in each year since 2000, broken down by rank; and how many civilian personnel there were in each year. [148780]

Ms Blears: The information requested is set out in the table. Decisions on the number of officers in each rank below that of Assistant Chief Constable is the responsibility of the Chief Constable.

(I) Police Strength by Rank (Durham Constabulary)

Rank	31 March 2000	31 March 2001	31 March 2002	31 March 2003
ACPO Ranks[1]	3	3	3	3
Chief Superintendent[2]	—	—	—	11
Superintendent	19	19	18	4
Chief Inspector	23	21	21	18
Inspector	78	81	80	85
Sergeant	209	207	215	218
Constable	1,226	1,264	1,277	1,313

[1] ACPO ranks include Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable.

[2] Chief Superintendent rank was abolished in April 1995 and was reintroduced from 1 January 2002. Separate collection of Chief Superintendent and Superintendent data was not reintroduced until March 2003.

(II) Police (Support) Staff

Year[1]	Number of Police Staff
2000	590
2001	566
2002	660
2003	602

[1] As at 31 March

Early Release

Mrs. Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many under 18-year-olds have been released under the early release of short-term prisoners; and how many were assigned a mentor on release. [146997]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The standard custodial sentence (up to 24 months) for offenders under 18 is the Detention and Training Order (DTO). Half the term is spent in custody and the remaining half under supervision in the community. Early release from custody (of one month, in the case of offenders serving terms of eight, 10 or 12 months; or one or two months, for those serving 18 or 24 months) has been available since the DTO was introduced in April 2000. In May 2002, new guidance specified that, in future, DTO trainees granted early release would be electronically monitored up to their original release-from-custody date.

Since 29 May 2002, 2,451 DTO trainees have been granted early release. The guidance does not specify that those released should be assigned a mentor. It is open to Youth Offending Teams to arrange this, and those offenders who undertake an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme during the community part of their DTO are usually assigned a mentor, but figures on this are not collected centrally.

Emergency Services (Radio Systems)

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the Government will ensure that usable spectrum is available to bidders seeking to supply and manage new radio network systems for the emergency services following the award of the contract for a new modern digital radio system for the police service to Airwave/02 in February 2000. [147809]

Ms Blears: Potential suppliers of public safety radio networks may apply to the interdepartmental Public Safety Spectrum Policy Group (PSSPG) for suitable radio spectrum. The PSSPG is an interdepartmental committee that ultimately answers to the UK Spectrum Strategy Committee of the Cabinet Office. Regularly updated information on available spectrum is available on the Ofcom website.

EU Accession Countries

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the residents of the nations securing membership of the EU in May will have automatic right of access to the United Kingdom on that date; and whether they will have access to social security and housing benefits; [146651]

(2) which member states of the EU have placed restrictions for seven years on the entitlement of new EU citizens to gain access and to secure benefits in their nations; and whether the UK is able to seek similar restrictions. [146652]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Under the EU Accession Treaty, citizens of all 10 new member states will enjoy the same right to travel freely across the EU as is enjoyed by citizens of the current member states, for all but one of the purposes envisaged by the EC Treaty. The Accession Treaty allows the 15 current member states to impose temporary restrictions on the right of citizens of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia to travel freely across the EU for the purpose of work. These restrictions may last, at the most, until 30 April 2011. Cypriot and Maltese citizens will enjoy free movement for work across the EU automatically on accession.

The United Kingdom Government, along with Denmark, Netherlands, Greece, Ireland and Sweden, have decided to allow access to their labour markets immediately upon the accession. Many other member states have yet to make any final decisions. France and Germany have indicated that they will impose some temporary restrictions on workers for at least two years from accession.

Citizens of the new member states will have the same rights and restrictions as citizens of existing EU member states in relation to access to social security and housing benefits.

Under EC law, a citizen of the European Union may not be discriminated against on the grounds of nationality and must enjoy the same access to social security benefits as a national of the state of residence.

The habitual residence test, which applies to income related non-contributory benefits, such as housing benefit and pension credit, has to be satisfied before a person can receive these benefits.

Entitlement to contributory benefits, such as state pension, depends on payment of national insurance contributions.

Citizens of other EU member states cannot come to the UK simply to claim benefits. They must first meet the Habitual Residence Test (HRT). The HRT covers non-contributory benefits including income support, jobseeker's allowance, housing benefit, and council tax benefit.

The Government are committed to ensuring that the benefits system and the taxpayers who support it are protected against abuse by people with little or no connection with the UK. Measures already in place under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, together with the HRT, help insure this. This area is kept under constant review to ensure that the benefit system remains fully robust and resistant to abuse.

Female Genital Mutilation

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what funding was provided to local authorities for the training of public service providers, with particular reference to police, teachers, doctors and nurses, to enable them to understand and identify women who have undergone female genital mutilation in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2002 and *(c)* 2003; [146054]

(2) what funding was provided to *(a)* St. Helens and *(b)* Merseyside for the training of public service providers, with particular reference to police, teachers, doctors and nurses, to enable them to understand and identify women who have undergone female genital mutilation in (i) 2001, (ii) 2002 and (iii) 2003. [146044]

Paul Goggins: No specific funding was provided to local authorities for this purpose.

However, the voluntary organisation the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD) received a core grant of £40,000 for each of the three years to 2004–05 and an additional sum of £25,000 for each of the three years to 2003–04 for a project aimed at mobilising professionals who work with children from communities where Female Genital Mutilation is practised. This involves assessing the training needs of a range of professionals and offering them training.

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 received Royal Assent on 30 October. The Government will take steps to ensure that relevant professionals are informed about this new legislation and their duties under it.

Forensic Science Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made of the case for private finance initiative for the Forensic Science Service to upgrade its laboratories. [148213]

Ms Blears: The independent McFarland Review identified that if the Forensic Science Service (FSS) were to remain a Trading Fund, funding for investment in laboratories would probably need to come from some form of Private Finance Initiative (PFI). This has not been assessed in detail as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, accepted the review's main conclusion that more fundamental changes were needed to secure the FSS' future growth and that this should be achieved by its transformation into a public private partnership.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of expenditure required to upgrade the Forensic Science Service laboratories in each of its centres; and if he will list the centres. [148365]

Ms Blears: Assessment of the capital expenditure requirement for the Forensic Science Service (FSS) was undertaken within the recent review of this organisation, led by Robert McFarland. It was estimated that the FSS requires capital expenditure in the region of £20 million to £30 million to sustain business at its present level in the emerging competitive climate. The Review team did not undertake a detailed study of the FSS's capital investment needs, which would be necessary to determine a precise figure and establish the investment required at each of the centres.

Fraud

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress his Department is making in dealing with *(a)* passport fraud and *(b)* duplicate or false national insurance numbers. [147327]

Beverley Hughes: I wrote to the hon. Member on 13 January 2004.

Gun Crime

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were committed in each year since 1996–97 involving *(a)* handguns, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* shotguns, *(d)* air weapons and *(e)* imitation firearms; and how many gun crimes for each year were drug-related. [148312]

Caroline Flint *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The relevant information is given in the table.

Number of recorded crimes in which a firearm was used[1]

Year[2]	*Handguns*	*Rifles*	*Shotguns*	*Air weapons*	*Imitation firearms*
1996	3,347	63	933	7,813	498
1997	2,648	51	580	7,506	511
1998–99[3]	2,687	43	642	8,665	566
1999–2000	3,685	67	693	10,103	823
2000–01	4,109	36	608	10,227	787
2001–02[4]	5,871	64	711	12,340	1,201

[1] Fired, used as a blunt instrument or in a threat.

[2] Calendar years up to 1997 and financial years thereafter.

[3] There was a change in counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998, which may have had an inflationary effect on firearm offence statistics.

[4] Some police forces adopted the National Crime Recording Standard in advance of its national implementation on 1 April 2002, and this may have had an inflationary effect on firearm offence statistics.

Statistics of whether firearms offences are drug-related are not collected centrally.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegally owned or carried *(a)* handguns, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* military weapons, *(d)* automatic weapons and *(e)* semi-automatic weapons have been recovered by (i) police forces in England and Wales and (ii) Customs and Excise at ports of entry in the UK in each of the last five years. [147384]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The information requested on weapons recovered by the police is not currently available.

Customs and Excise have provided the following details to the Home Office of the numbers of firearms they have seized in the last five years. These figures include imports and exports. Any military, automatic and semi-automatic weapons will be included in the totals and are not separately identified.

Number of illegal firearms seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise

Year ended 31 March	*Handguns*	*Rifles*	*Shotguns*
1999	85	106	55
2000	420	100	135
2001	168	49	51
2002	305	113	230
2003	127	102	41

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been prosecuted for conversion of *(a)* air and *(b)* imitation weapons to fire live ammunition in each of the last five years. [147395]

Caroline Flint *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* The available information is given in the table. The statistics collected centrally relate only to the illegal conversion into firearms of anything which, though having the appearance of being a firearm, is so constructed as to be incapable of discharging any missile through its barrel. It is not possible to make a distinction between the type of guns converted, but the conversion of air weapons is not covered by the offence under section 4(3) of the Firearms Act 1968 since most are already classified as firearms.

Persons proceeded against for conversion of firearms, England and Wales

	Number
1998	4
1999	3
2000	[1]1
2001	3
2002	4

[1] Excludes figures for Staffordshire.

Note:
Statistics for 2003 will be published in the autumn.

Lancashire Police Force

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the full-time equivalent strength of the police force in Lancashire, broken down by rank, for each of the last three years. [148366]

Ms Blears: The information requested is set out in the table. Decisions on the number of officers in each rank below that of Assistant Chief Constable is the responsibility of the Chief Constable.

Rank	*31 March 2001*	*31 March 2002*	*31 March 2003*
ACPO Ranks[1]	4	4	4
Chief Superintendent[2]	—	—	8
Superintendent	33	31	20
Chief Inspector	37	35	41
Inspector	163	166	174
Sergeant	513	513	514
Constable	2,505	2,555	2,578

[1] ACPO ranks include Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable.

[2] Chief Superintendent rank was abolished in April 1995 and was reintroduced from 1 January 2002. Separate collection of Chief Superintendent and Superintendent data was not reintroduced until March 2003.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special constables there were in Lancashire, in each of the last three years, broken down by rank. [148367]

Ms Blears: Home Office figures on police strength moved to an annual cycle from March 2002 and are available in the House Library, as are previous publications. The total number of Special Constables in Lancashire for each of the past three years is as follows:

31 March 2001—360

31 March 2002—363

31 March 2003—351.

There are no ranks specified in Regulations for the Special Constabulary and information concerning grades used within forces is not collected centrally.

Leak Inquiries

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inquiries his Department has conducted into alleged leaks from members of staff since 1997; and on what occasions the names of those persons accused of leaking information from his Department have been made public *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by way of another source. [147008]

Fiona Mactaggart *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Since 1997, the Home Office has investigated 65 suspected leaks. In line with Exemptions 1 (a) and 7 (b) set out in Part II of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it has been the practice of successive governments not to comment on the outcome of such inquiries in order to safeguard security and investigative arrangements.

Migrant Workers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many migrant workers there are in the UK *(a)* from the EU and *(b)* from outside the EU; and what percentage he estimates are legal migrant workers. [142417]

Beverley Hughes: It is not possible to provide the information in the form requested. Such information we can provide is set out in the table.

The total number of migrant workers with a UK arrival date April 2001 to March 2002; applying for a national insurance number

	Number
Total	156,400
EU	43,265
Outside the EU	113,135

Notes:
1. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
2. Figures are taken from a 100 per cent. sample and are rounded to the nearest five.

Source:
IAD Information Centre

Murders (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many murders were *(a)* committed and *(b)* solved in Lancashire in each of the last five years. [148211]

Ms Blears: The information requested is given in the table.

Numbers of homicide[1] offences recorded by Lancashire Police

	Offences recorded	Offences detected
1998–99	24	24
1999–2000	19	18
2000–01	27	26
2001–02	21	21
2002–03	28	24

[1] Homicide is comprised of murder, manslaughter and infanticide offences.

Overseas Visitors

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people visited the United Kingdom from *(a)* Cameroon, *(b)* Romania and *(c)* South Africa in the last year for which figures are available. [147781]

Beverley Hughes: The latest available information is given in the following table.

Passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors, by nationality, 2002

United Kingdom — *Number of journeys*

	Total	Ordinary visitor	Business visitor
Romania	30,800	11,400	19,300
South Africa	189,000	146,000	42,900

Note:
The figures in this table have been rounded to three significant digits;
because of this the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the total as shown.

I regret that is not possible to identify Cameroon separately in our visitor statistics.

Data on passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom are published in the Command Paper 'Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2002' (Cm6053), obtainable from the House Library, The Stationery Office and via the Home Office website http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hobpubs1.html.

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people entered the UK from the USA in the latest year for which figures are available. [148411]

Beverley Hughes: The latest available information shows that a total of 4,220,000 USA nationals were admitted to the United Kingdom during 2002.

Data on passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom are published in the Command Paper 'Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2002' (Cm 6053), obtainable from the Library, The Stationery Office and via the Home Office website http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hobpubs1.html

Parliamentary Questions

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he will reply to written question No.142767 of 8 December 2003; [149507]

(2) when he will reply to written question No.142763 of 8 December 2003. [149508]

Beverley Hughes: I have replied to both written questions 142763 and 142767 from the hon. Member. The former was answered on 15 January 2003, *Official Report*, column 877, and the latter was answered today, 20 January.

Police

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the current level is of police civilian support staff. [148315]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 19 January 2004]*: The number of full-time equivalent police staff for the police service in England and Wales (includes 43 police force areas and the National Crime Squad) was 63,105 on 31 March 2003. This figure excludes community support officers and traffic wardens.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police force in England and Wales *(a)* in rank order and *(b)* in alphabetical order the ratio of full-time equivalent police officers to population (i) in 1996–97 and (ii) on the latest available date. [148313]

Ms Blears *[holding answer 19 January 2004]*: The following table provides the ratio of police officers to population for 31 March 1997 and 31 March 2003.

Police officer strength[1]

Rank order				Alphabetical order			
Police force area	March 1997[2]	Police force area	March 2003[2,3]	Police force area	March 1997[2]	Police force area	March 2003[2,3]
Metropolitan Police[4]	367	Metropolitan Police[4]	401	Avon and Somerset	204	Avon and Somerset	212
Merseyside	296	West Midlands	303	Bedfordshire	200	Bedfordshire	195
Gwent	275	Merseyside	301	Cambridgeshire	188	Cambridgeshire	195
West Midlands	270	Greater Manchester	296	Cheshire	209	Cheshire	215

Police officer strength[1]

Rank order				*Alphabetical order*			
Police force area	*March 1997*[2]	*Police force area*	*March 2003*[2,3]	*Police force area*	*March 1997*[2]	*Police force area*	*March 2003*[2,3]
Greater Manchester	268	Cleveland	292	City of London[4]	—	City of London[4]	—
Cleveland	261	Northumbria	285	Cleveland	261	Cleveland	292
Northumbria	256	Durham	279	Cumbria	233	Cumbria	234
West Yorkshire	247	South Wales	270	Derbyshire	187	Derbyshire	209
South Yorkshire	242	South Yorkshire	251	Devon and Cornwall	186	Devon and Cornwall	203
Durham	240	Gwent	243	Dorset	189	Dorset	204
Cumbria	233	Humberside	242	Durham	240	Durham	279
Humberside	230	West Yorkshire	242	Dyfed-Powys	212	Dyfed-Powys	235
Lancashire	228	Nottinghamshire	237	Essex	197	Essex	185
Nottinghamshire	225	Lancashire	236	Gloucestershire	205	Gloucestershire	217
South Wales	223	Dyfed-Powys	235	Greater Manchester	268	Greater Manchester	296
Dyfed-Powys	212	Cumbria	234	Gwent	275	Gwent	243
Leicestershire	211	North Wales	232	Hampshire	198	Hampshire	206
Sussex	211	Leicestershire	229	Hertfordshire	205	Hertfordshire	189
Kent	210	Kent	221	Humberside	230	Humberside	242
Staffordshire	209	Gloucestershire	217	Kent	210	Kent	221
Cheshire	209	Cheshire	215	Lancashire	228	Lancashire	236
Surrey	209	Avon and Somerset	212	Leicestershire	211	Leicestershire	229
North Wales	208	Staffordshire	210	Lincolnshire	196	Lincolnshire	189
Gloucestershire	205	Derbyshire	209	Merseyside	296	Merseyside	301
Hertfordshire	205	Hampshire	206	Metropolitan Police[4]	367	Metropolitan Police[4]	401
Avon and Somerset	204	Dorset	204	Norfolk	185	Norfolk	188
Bedfordshire	200	Devon and Cornwall	203	North Wales	208	North Wales	232
Hampshire	198	Sussex	200	North Yorkshire	183	North Yorkshire	192
Essex	197	Warwickshire	197	Northamptonshire	196	Northamptonshire	192
Northamptonshire	196	Bedfordshire	195	Northumbria	256	Northumbria	285
Lincolnshire	196	Cambridgeshire	195	Nottinghamshire	225	Nottinghamshire	237
Wiltshire	195	West Mercia	195	South Wales	223	South Wales	270
Dorset	189	North Yorkshire	192	South Yorkshire	242	South Yorkshire	251
Cambridgeshire	188	Northamptonshire	192	Staffordshire	209	Staffordshire	210
Derbyshire	187	Hertfordshire	189	Suffolk	180	Suffolk	187
Devon and Cornwall	186	Wiltshire	189	Surrey	209	Surrey	180
Warwickshire	186	Lincolnshire	189	Sussex	211	Sussex	200
Norfolk	185	Norfolk	188	Thames Valley	180	Thames Valley	183
West Mercia	183	Suffolk	187	Warwickshire	186	Warwickshire	197
North Yorkshire	183	Essex	185	West Mercia	183	West Mercia	195
Thames Valley	180	Thames Valley	183	West Midlands	270	West Midlands	303
Suffolk	180	Surrey	180	West Yorkshire	247	West Yorkshire	242
City of London[4]	—	City of London[4]	—	Wiltshire	195	Wiltshire	189
Total	241		252	Total	241		252

[1] Full-time equivalents
[2] Police strength per 100,000 population
[3] Comparable strength
[4] City of London and Metropolitan Police combined

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Tetra technology was chosen for the UK police force modern digital radio system, excluding competition from other technologies. [147810]

Ms Blears: Expert assessments of available technologies were made at the start of the procurement process for the new police radio system. The experts concluded that TETRA was the only standard to meet fully the requirements of the police service.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers, broken down by *(a)* sex and *(b)* ethnicity, were employed by each English police force in (i) 1992, (ii) 1997, (iii) 2001 and (iv) at the latest date for which figures are available. [148407]

Ms Blears: The available information is given in the following tables:

Police officer strength[1] *in England by gender as at 31 March*

English police forces	*1992*	*1997*	*2001*	*2003*
Males				
Avon and Somerset	2,769	2,622	2,530	2,638
Bedfordshire	940	911	837	881
Cambridgeshire	1,107	1,119	1,105	1,144

Police officer strength[1] *in England by gender as at 31 March*

English police forces	*1992*	*1997*	*2001*	*2003*
Cheshire	1,649	1,759	1,669	1,725
Cleveland	1,319	1,251	1,163	1,321
Cumbria	1,041	970	870	901
Derbyshire	1,531	1,564	1,553	1,643
Devon and Cornwall	2,769	2,458	2,428	2,600
Dorset	1,135	1,105	1,121	1,165
Durham	1,264	1,229	1,295	1,316
Essex	2,554	2,493	2,419	2,413
Gloucestershire	1,046	979	945	979
Greater Manchester	6,142	5,774	5,627	5,940
Hampshire	2,852	2,917	2,833	2,934
Hertfordshire	1,446	1,453	1,546	1,530
Humberside	1,840	1,761	1,604	1,700
Kent	2,660	2,734	2,683	2,784
Lancashire	2,833	2,722	2,676	2,716
Leicestershire	1,626	1,630	1,707	1,758
Lincolnshire	1,078	1,047	1,034	1,020
City of London	713	739	607	676
Merseyside	4,083	3,561	3,413	3,407
Metropolitan police	24,416	22,779	20,946	23,290
Norfolk	1,288	1,239	1,195	1,250
Northamptonshire	1,044	1,006	959	963
Northumbria	3,117	3,160	3,244	3,272
North Yorkshire	1,249	1,160	1,109	1,197
Nottinghamshire	2,103	2,006	1,795	2,011
South Yorkshire	2,676	2,684	2,600	2,551
Staffordshire	1,883	1,839	1,708	1,766

Police officer strength[1] in England by gender as at 31 March

English police forces	*1992*	*1997*	*2001*	*2003*
Suffolk	1,084	996	935	1,003
Surrey	1,491	1,386	1,703	1,501
Sussex	2,665	2,633	2,361	2,390
Thames Valley	3,252	3,106	3,051	3,086
Warwickshire	883	800	780	815
West Mercia	1,783	1,740	1,625	1,822
West Midlands	5,934	5,742	5,775	5,926
West Yorkshire	4,490	4,403	3,985	4,038
Wiltshire	1,080	1,001	914	917
Females				
Avon and Somerset	312	367	430	511
Bedfordshire	153	183	199	225
Cambridgeshire	143	183	191	240
Cheshire	225	287	334	394
Cleveland	158	209	244	261
Cumbria	138	174	178	239
Derbyshire	175	227	270	360
Devon and Cornwall	312	407	506	602
Dorset	154	179	233	251
Durham	125	232	300	336
Essex	344	468	468	576
Gloucestershire	141	154	228	248
Greater Manchester	919	1,148	1,282	1,403
Hampshire	359	535	602	734
Hertfordshire	249	306	376	428
Humberside	186	284	314	405
Kent	414	526	635	703
Lancashire	365	525	579	623
Leicestershire	219	319	326	355
Lincolnshire	118	149	169	202
City of London	95	120	96	132
Merseyside	583	669	668	692
Metropolitan police	3,738	3,899	3,932	4,694
Norfolk	126	193	225	249
Northamptonshire	114	171	198	247
Northumbria	347	517	614	672
North Yorkshire	149	178	196	246
Nottinghamshire	228	318	417	400
South Yorkshire	332	475	597	633
Staffordshire	293	372	420	436
Suffolk	134	184	197	250
Surrey	215	234	363	406
Sussex	319	452	495	599
Thames Valley	520	589	652	747
Warwickshire	107	126	146	182
West Mercia	251	301	326	434
West Midlands	1,007	1,371	1,648	1,825
West Yorkshire	597	806	830	990
Wiltshire	141	153	206	241

[1] Full-time equivalents

Minority ethnic police officer strength[1] as at 31 March

English police forces	*1992[3]*	*1997*	*2001*	*2003[2]*
Males				
Avon and Somerset	18	25	29	36
Bedfordshire	30	0	27	42
Cambridgeshire	18	20	23	29
Cheshire	1	4	6	8
Cleveland	10	15	17	22
Cumbria	2	1	2	3
Derbyshire	23	30	36	53
Devon and Cornwall	2	4	9	15
Dorset	3	5	7	10
Durham	3	6	12	20
Essex	20	25	23	35
Gloucestershire	10	9	14	17
Greater Manchester	105	137	163	199
Hampshire	13	26	33	40
Hertfordshire	13	16	25	33
Humberside	5	9	8	16
Kent	9	13	35	40
Lancashire	25	26	41	64
Leicestershire	49	66	76	82
Lincolnshire	1	3	8	9

Minority ethnic police officer strength[1] as at 31 March

English police forces	*1992[3]*	*1997*	*2001*	*2003[2]*
City of London	6	11	14	23
Merseyside	48	61	65	50
Metropolitan police	433	641	840	1,269
Norfolk	0	7	12	14
Northamptonshire	17	25	26	33
Northumbria	11	21	28	45
North Yorkshire	4	7	5	14
Nottinghamshire	40	45	48	68
South Yorkshire	24	58	69	64
Staffordshire	14	21	22	20
Suffolk	4	8	12	18
Surrey	13	17	24	28
Sussex	12	15	22	25
Thames Valley	45	61	71	90
Warwickshire	7	15	18	26
West Mercia	14	23	21	23
West Midlands	145	208	264	315
West Yorkshire	72	108	110	129
Wiltshire	11	11	8	11
Females				
Avon and Somerset	5	5	5	8
Bedfordshire	11	12	11	9
Cambridgeshire	8	8	8	6
Cheshire	1	1	3	3
Cleveland	2	2	1	1
Cumbria	0	1	1	2
Derbyshire	4	7	9	9
Devon and Cornwall	0	0	3	6
Dorset	0	0	2	2
Durham	1	2	2	5
Essex	2	6	10	15
Gloucestershire	2	3	2	1
Greater Manchester	21	24	25	37
Hampshire	2	5	6	9
Hertfordshire	5	3	6	10
Humberside	1	2	4	6
Kent	2	5	8	11
Lancashire	5	7	11	12
Leicestershire	5	11	16	15
Lincolnshire	2	2	2	3
City of London	2	8	4	5
Merseyside	9	15	16	12
Metropolitan police	130	184	209	316
Norfolk	0	1	3	2
Northamptonshire	2	5	5	6
Northumbria	2	5	5	7
North Yorkshire	0	5	1	
Nottinghamshire	11	16	17	13
South Yorkshire	4	11	15	16
Staffordshire	5	6	8	11
Suffolk	2	4	6	9
Surrey	2	3	7	14
Sussex	4	7	8	8
Thames Valley	12	12	21	28
Warwickshire	2	5	5	5
West Mercia	4	3	2	4
West Midlands	47	75	112	124
West Yorkshire	17	22	29	34
Wiltshire	2	2	1	1

[1] Headcount

[2] Year 2003 not comparable with previous years as previously published figures exclude officers on career breaks and maternity/paternity leave

[3] Full-time equivalent

Prisons

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people aged over 65 years are serving sentences in England and Wales; and what provisions are being made to meet their health, social and rehabilitation needs. [145626]

Paul Goggins: The number of sentenced prisoners in prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 2002 who were aged 65 and over was 636.

The Prison Service does recognise its duty to care for older prisoners and seeks to meet all their needs, including medical, according to individual circumstances. The Service does not allocate specific resources to the rehabilitation of older prisoners but rather through a system of sentence planning for all prisoners it ensures that they undertake activities necessary to reduce the risk to the public on release as well as providing any necessary resettlement support.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile prisoners in each prison are foreign nationals. [144352]

Paul Goggins: Information on the number of prisoners aged under 18, in each prison in England and Wales, who are foreign nationals is given in the following table.

Foreign national prisoners aged under 18 as at 30 April 2003

	Number
Ashfield	2
Brinsford	4
Bullwood Hall	2
Castington	1
Dover	1
Feltham	59
Hindley	1
Hollesley Bay/Warren Hill	14
Holloway	2
Huntercombe	20
Lancaster Farms	2
New Hall	2
Onley	4
Pare	1
Stoke Heath	4
Thorn Cross	1
Werrington	1
Wetherby	5
Total	126

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of *(a)* the prison population and *(b)* young offenders had previously been in local authority care in each of the last five years. [147336]

Paul Goggins: Information on the percentage of the prison population who had previously been in local authority care is not held centrally.

The National Prison Survey 1991 reported that 26 per cent. of prisoners surveyed were in care as a child. For those prisoners aged under 21, 38 per cent. were in care as a child.

Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long the longest-serving *(a)* male and *(b)* female prison inmate has been held in prison; and for what offence they were convicted when they were originally sentenced to imprisonment. [148598]

Paul Goggins: The longest serving male prison inmate was received into custody 51 years ago and was convicted of murder. The longest serving female prison inmate was received into custody 22 years ago and was convicted of kidnapping.

Mr. Stinchcombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in HM prisons in England and Wales are sharing *(a)* two to a cell designated for one and *(b)* three to a cell designated for two. [146956]

Paul Goggins: At the end of November 2003 16,692 prisoners were held two to a cell designed for one, while 1,206 prisoners were held three to a cell designed for two.

The data are provisional and subject to validation by prisons.

Mr. Flight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the weekly cost of keeping a prisoner in prison was in the last year for which figures are available. [147412]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 4 January 2004]:* The weekly cost per prisoner for prisons in England and Wales in 2002–03 was £697. This figure is expressed in resource accounting terms.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all *(a)* private and *(b)* voluntary providers of services to the Prison Service, together with the services they provide to each prison. [147370]

Paul Goggins: The information requested is not available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost. At the present time there are around 20,000 organisations—voluntary, public and private—providing goods and services to the Prison Service.

Mr. Simon Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the visiting hours and days were for each prison in April in each year since 1997; and what the visiting hours and days will be for each prison in April 2004. [147950]

Paul Goggins: Prisoners' minimum entitlements to visits, in terms of regularity and length are prescribed centrally. The arrangements for both social and official visits are, however, determined locally by individual governors, taking into account operational matters and resources. Data on these arrangements are not centrally collated and to do so would be at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Heyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to increase the opportunities for prisoners to find employment once released back into the community. [148314]

Paul Goggins: *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The Government are investing £14.5 million a year in the Prison Service Custody to Work initiative. This is linked to a target of 31,500 job, training or education outcomes for prisoners on release in 2003–04. The Prison Service is increasing skills training and jobsearch training and support for prisoners, developing closer partnerships with employers and Jobcentre Plus, and providing more housing advice and support services for prisoners.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce re-offending by *(a)* involving families in resettlement work throughout the prison sentence and *(b)* maintaining prisoners' family ties. [146229]

Paul Goggins: The Prison Service acknowledges that family and other community links are vital to effective resettlement of prisoners, and that families have a valuable role to play in helping to reduce re-offending and protect the public.

With regard to offenders under the age of 18, and all those sentenced to the detention and training order, there is a mandatory requirement on governors to ensure that, where appropriate, families are given the opportunity to contribute to the sentence planning process throughout the custodial part of the sentence. For adult prisoners the extent of involvement is left to the discretion of individual establishments.

The Prison Service has been working, together with other agencies, to develop an integrated approach to supporting prisoners and their families in sustaining their relationships. Examples of such work include:

Participation in the Inter-Ministerial Group response to the Social Exclusion Unit report "Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners", in particular how best to take forward the proposal for a National Rehabilitation Strategy.

Establishment of a seven-year partnership with voluntary and statutory agencies in the Eastern Area offering a comprehensive package of services and support to the families of prisoners within prisons and in the wider community.

Providing information to prisoners to enable them to maintain family links and giving advice to families about prisons and the opportunities for keeping in touch.

Enabling prisoners' families to maintain ties through improved visiting conditions, such as extended family visits; play areas and story tapes for children recorded by the imprisoned parent; and increasing the number of visitors' centres which offer additional support.

Development of family learning programmes, some of which include attendance by partners and children.

Refocusing of the multi-agency Family Ties Consultative Group to enhance policy development in this area.

Continuing to offer financial assistance for families on low income visiting prisoners through the Assisted Prisons Visits scheme.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many transsexuals are serving prison sentences. [147697]

Paul Goggins: Information is not held centrally on the number of transsexuals serving prison sentences.

Departmental Procurement

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether his Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries his Department has outsourced these jobs; how much his Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147587]

Fiona Mactaggart: The Home Office procurement policy follows standard Government procurement policy that all public procurement is based on value for money, having due regard to propriety, security of information and regularity. The Home Office comply with the requirements of the EU Treaty, including the principal of non-discrimination, the EC procurement directives and the UK's international obligations. This procurement policy applies to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing.

The Home Office is not currently outsourcing IT or call centre jobs to offshore companies and has not spent anything on outsourcing these services to offshore companies in the last two years.

No funds have been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years.

Prostitution

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the reform of laws relating to prostitution; and if he will make a statement. [147074]

Caroline Flint: The Sex Offences Act, due to be implemented in May 2004, introduces a range of new offences specifically dealing with the exploitation of children and adults through prostitution.

We are currently examining what further changes to the criminal law are needed in respect of prostitution, as well as some of the wider associated issues—including the links with serious drug abuse, violent and other crime, and damage to local communities. We hope to publish a paper for public consultation later this year.

Criminal Convictions

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the change in *(a)* criminal convictions and *(b)* the custodial population between 1980 and 2000. [141794]

Paul Goggins: I refer the hon. Member to my letter of 18 December 2003.

Parole

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the *(a)* age of victim, *(b)* type of offence, *(c)* age of complainant and *(d)* relationship of accused to complainant was for each of the deniers who applied for parole, referred to on page 17 of the latest Parole Board report. [146287]

Paul Goggins: The information requested is not held centrally and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the offence categories were for the prisoners who were denied parole on the basis of their continuing denial of guilt in April 2003. [146288]

Paul Goggins: There were no prisoners refused parole in April 2003 on the grounds of their continued denial of guilt. It would be unlawful for the Parole Board to refuse parole on the basis of denial of guilt or any factors that may stem from it.

The Prison Service does not maintain a central record of prisoners who deny their guilt. However, since January 2003, the Parole Board has kept a record of all such cases referred for their consideration. Its records show that in April 2003 the following categories of prisoners who denied guilt had a parole review.

	Number
Sexual offenders	18
Violent offenders	4
Property offenders	2
Drug offenders	4
Other	1

Somerset Drugs Service

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons why the Somerset Drugs Service has stopped providing drug rehabilitation support for drug addicts in the Yeovil constituency other than for pregnant women and suicide risks; and what assessment he has made of the effects of this decision on levels of crime. [147416]

Caroline Flint *[holding answer 14 January 2004]:* The Government have provided the Somerset Drug Action Team (DAT) with substantially increased funds in order to reduce waiting times for admission to treatment in the county. This year Somerset Drugs Service (SDS), one of the service providers, had their budget increased by £200,950 to £1,763,214. Following the consequent increase in availability of treatment there has been a substantial increase in those seeking treatment. In quarter 2 of 2002 SDS had 287 active clients of whom 74 were in Yeovil; in quarter 2 of 2003 SDS had 426 active clients of whom 146 were in Yeovil representing almost a 100 per cent. increase in demand in the town in the space of a year. Such dramatic increases have put some short-term pressure on budgets, which has temporarily prevented waiting times being reduced as quickly as originally anticipated. However no one who needs it will be denied treatment. All those presenting for treatment continue to be to prioritised according to assessed need and the risk of harm to self and to the community.

In order to continue to expand the service to drug users and provide the most effective treatment in the face of increasing demand the DAT commissioned a strategic review from Oxford Brookes University of the whole of its adult drug treatment system. The results of this review are being considered at a meeting on 13 January. In addition to £35,000 allocated this financial year, from April, the DAT has been allocated an extra £284,462 from the Governments Criminal Justice Intervention Programme Throughcare and Aftercare Budget. These increases will ensure that treatment provision continues to improve by assisting the DAT and implement the recommendations of its strategic review.

As a result of targeting prolific offenders and making rapid treatment available to them, where necessary, the county has seen significant falls in rates of burglary over the first three quarters of this financial year when compared to the same period last year.

Street Crime

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on street crime in towns and cities, with particular reference to Romford. [148489]

Ms Blears: The Street Crime Initiative was launched on 17 March 2002 to reduce levels of robbery in England. It covers the 10 police force areas which together account for the great majority of recorded robbery: Avon and Somerset, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, the Metropolitan Police, Merseyside, Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, Thames Valley, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire.

The Initiative involves a wide range of agencies working in partnership and delivering a programme of practical measures. Through this work, the Government has reduced street crime in the 10 police force areas by 17 per cent. in 2002–03, which means 17,000 fewer offences, and by 21 per cent. in the Metropolitan Police area. Havering, which includes Romford, saw a 13 per cent. reduction in robbery in 2002–03, with 479 offences, down from 549 in 2001–02.

Speed Cameras

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that speed cameras do not take pictures of a vehicle's reflection rather than the vehicle itself to calculate speed; and how many drivers he estimates have been wrongly penalised by reason of such errors. [149006]

Caroline Flint: The rigorous type approval process operated by the Home Office Police Scientific Development Branch (PSDB) is designed to ensure that speed camera evidence can be fully relied on

As a further precaution, however, all automatic static camera devices provide for a secondary check. This enables the officer viewing an apparent offence to make a judgment as to the vehicle's speed independent of the speed measured by the device. To enable this check, the device takes two photographs 0.5 seconds apart. The secondary check is performed by measuring the distance travelled along white lines painted on the road between the taking of the two photographs and calculating the vehicle's speed from these.

While it is technically possible for a camera to record a vehicle's reflection, rather than the vehicle itself, this is extremely rare in practice. Where it does occur, the difference revealed by proper application of the secondary check will make it obvious that there has been an error.

Traffic Wardens

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many traffic wardens there were in Lancashire in each of the last three years. [148368]

Ms Blears: The number of full-time equivalent traffic wardens in Lancashire police force in each of the last three years were as follows:

	Traffic wardens
31 March 2001	87
31 March 2002	84
31 March 2003	50

Visas (School Children)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to overcome

administrative problems over visas required by children at school in the UK who are resident abroad to travel home for holidays. [144933]

Beverley Hughes: The Immigration and Nationality Directorate gives priority attention to applications for children who need to travel urgently. Extra staff have been allocated to resolving payment issues and process timelags that can delay these applications from being decided. Resources have been prioritised to ensure every effort is made so that schoolchildren and other customers who wish to travel urgently have their applications completed or a short period of leave granted to enable them to travel.

Young Offenders

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to provide drug treatment for young offenders addicted to hard drugs. [148602]

Caroline Flint: To ensure that effective treatment is available when it is needed, we have made significant investments in the youth justice system and drug treatment sector.

An arrest referral scheme for young people is currently being piloted, to get young offenders into treatment or other appropriate interventions as early as possible. £6 million is being invested to pilot arrest referral for young people in 10 high crime areas across England. Trained staff in the police custody suites identify if young people have a substance misuse issue and refer them to appropriate treatment or intervention.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has provided £8.5 million funding each year for all 155 youth offending teams across England and Wales to have access to an allocated named drugs worker. The drugs worker is able to assess the needs of young people and ensure that they receive appropriate treatment or other interventions.

80 per cent of drug action teams areas now have access to community-based young people focused treatment services. DATs across the country are continuing to improve and build on existing provision so that the number of different modalities of treatment for young people are increased.

The Youth Justice Board is investing £10 million this year and for the next two years. This will establish integrated substance misuse services through out all juvenile custodial institutions that will ensure that young people are able to access similar levels of service provision within the juvenile secure estate as in the community. The Youth Justice Board will ensure that custodial institutions are able to provide: identification, assessment and planning services; prevention and education work; support and appropriate programmes; detoxification and clinical management; and on release throughcare and resettlement.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the decision to re-introduce young offenders into Gloucester Prison; and whether the decision was affected by the closure of Ashfield Young Offenders Institution. [146729]

Paul Goggins: The allocation of young adult offenders (YAOs), aged 18- 20, into Gloucester prison forms part of the ongoing programme to adjust the population mix of adult and young prisoners at a number of establishments. This is in response to the requirements of the Youth Justice Board for juvenile places and to increasing demand for spaces for adult male prisoners. This will be achieved through careful monitoring of population changes and the allocation of prisoners to establishments appropriate to their needs. It will also ensure maximum use of all available spaces in the prison estate, while minimising the distance of remand prisoners from the courts. This will enable the Prison Service to maintain its service to the courts despite the population pressures.

Ashfield prison is not being closed, but will instead only hold young prisoners, aged 15–17. Gloucester and other prisons in the area will hold remand and sentenced YAOs. Sentenced YAOs returning from court will be held at Gloucester for the minimum time possible before being transferred on to other establishments with YAO regimes.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 21 January 2004

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will rule out amending to 15 per cent. the Government's 2010 target for reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. [148613]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The Government today published for consultation its draft National Allocation Plan for the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. In doing so, we reaffirmed our commitment to our domestic goal to move towards a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide of 20 per cent. on 1990 levels by 2010.

The UK Climate Change Programme sets out the policy framework to ensure that we meet our Kyoto target and move towards the domestic goal. We are committed to reviewing the Programme this year, which will provide an opportunity to introduce new policies and measures, or to strengthen existing ones, if the conclusion is that more needs to be done to achieve the domestic goal.

Montreal Protocol

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how her Department is working to ensure that the UK fulfils its obligations under the Montreal Protocol. [148006]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The UK signed and ratified the Montreal Protocol in 1987, and has since ratified the four other amendments, London (1990) Copenhagen (1992) Montreal (1997) and Beijing (1999). The Community has implemented its obligations under the Montreal Protocol through EC Regulation 2037/2000, which is directly applicable in UK law. This Regulation has put in place an accelerated phase-out programme on the supply and use of ozone depleting substances, as EU member states were keen to move faster than the Protocol. A statutory Instrument has been introduced which creates offences and sets penalties for any breaches of the ozone regulation.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the audited amount of *(a)* plutonium and *(b)* uranium at each nuclear energy facility which was unaccounted for in each year since 1997. [148500]

Nigel Griffiths: I have been asked to reply.

In accordance with international practice, the inventory difference that occurs when the result of a physical inventory of nuclear material is compared with the book inventory is referred to as MUF ('material unaccounted for'). The difference may be negative (an apparent loss) or positive (an apparent gain). MUF is a recognised feature of accounting for nuclear material and is caused primarily by the uncertainties inherent in the techniques used to measure nuclear material. MUF figures at UKAEA, BNFL and Urenco sites are published annually by the industry. Copies of the figures published since 1997 have been placed in the Library of the House. There is no evidence to suggest that there have been any real losses or gains of nuclear material.

Oral Statements

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reason she has made no oral statement to the House on an environmental matter since July 2002. [148586]

Margaret Beckett: I take very seriously the importance of keeping the House properly informed across the whole range of my broad portfolio of responsibilities.

Packaging Waste

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reasons the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003 were not published until 14 January; and if she will delay their entry into force. [148980]

Mr. Morley: The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 were not published until 14 January due to delays caused by the Christmas holiday period. However, the Regulations came into force on 1 January 2004, as intended.

Protected Species

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the criteria are for designating a wild species of animal as protected. [148656]

Mr. Bradshaw: Every five years the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) advises Government on which animals should be legally protected by listing on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. JNCC reported to Government with its recommendations in September 2002, which included full protection for this species. The next stage is for Government to conduct a public consultation based on these recommendations, which will occur in spring 2004. Following this consultation, the Secretary of State will decide on the changes to be made to the schedules and these will be implemented by Statutory Instrument.

For a species to be recommended for scheduling one of the eligibility criteria in each of the Sections A to D below should be met:

A. Generally, only native (including re-established) taxa are to be considered. Taxa introduced or thought to be introduced to Great Britain by man could be considered exceptionally, with the following provisos.

(i) the organism is endangered or extinct in its native range, and

(ii) preferably, the natural range reaches the north west coast of Europe (i.e. continental distribution extends to the Atlantic coast of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany or Scandinavia; for marine taxa, the distribution includes the north west Atlantic area), and provided that

(iii) information suggests that the organism is unlikely to have an adverse impact on important native species or ecosystems.

B. The taxon must be either:

(i) established in the wild in Great Britain; or

(ii) occur as a vagrant in Great Britain and require international protection; or

(iii) be believed extinct in Great Britain as a breeding species, but be in the process of re-establishment; or

(iv) be believed extinct in Great Britain, but with the possibility that it could become re-established naturally.

C. The taxonomic status of the organism must be well authenticated. Taxa below the species level could be considered, providing they are:

(i) clearly recognisable (i.e. morphologically distinct), and

(ii) geographically or ecologically distinct.

D. The taxon must be endangered in Great Britain, or likely to become so unless conservation measures are taken, and/or be subject to an international obligation for protection. One or more of the following may indicate that a taxon is or may become endangered:

(i) it is included in a JNCC-approved British Red Data Book as Extinct, Endangered or Vulnerable (or, in Red Lists drawn up using the recently revised IUCN criteria, as Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable)]

(ii) it has been well searched for but is known from only a single locality;

(iii) it is confined to a particularly threatened habitat. The extent or quality of the habitat is being significantly reduced or is likely to become significantly reduced, thus threatening the survival of the organism;

(iv) it is rapidly declining in population, number of localities occupied or range. Indicative would be at least 50 per cent. decline observed, estimated inferred or suspected in the last 20 years, or a decline of at least 50 per cent. projected, inferred or suspected to be likely in the near future. The decline must transcend normal fluctuations;

(v) it is endangered, or likely to become endangered through being targeted for exploitation or killing for commercial reasons and/or through being particularly attractive to collectors.

International obligations apply to a taxon which is:

(vi) naturally resident and listed on Appendices I, II or III of the Bern Convention; Annexes II, IV or V of the EC Habitats and Species Directive; Appendix I of the Bonn Convention (unless derogations are in force); and/or endemic to Great Britain and included in a JNCC-approved British Red List.

TRANSPORT

Drink-driving

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has undertaken of the impact on drink-related accidents of lowering the legal limit of alcohol for drivers from 80 mg to 50 mg; and for what reasons he has not introduced a lower alcohol in blood limit. [147927]

Mr. Jamieson: The Government considers that strengthened enforcement of existing controls, combined with publicity and education, is the appropriate basis for dealing with drink-drive accidents and casualties. The Government carried out an analysis of the possible savings in road traffic casualties from a reduction in the legal alcohol limit for the purposes of the 1998 consultation document "Combating Drink Driving: Next Steps", a copy of which is in the House Library. This estimated that a reduction in the limit to 50mg/100ml could save around 50 fatalities per year, but was based on a number of assumptions about accident causation and individual driver compliance. We have also considered more recent published research into the potential impact of lowering the limit, the results of which appear to be inconclusive.

Shipping

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* injuries and *(b)* fatalities of employees of shipping companies there were in each year since 1997, broken down by company. [148486]

Mr. Jamieson: The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB), a separate branch within the DfT, records injuries and fatalities to crew of UK vessels.

Regulation 9(1)(e) of The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 1999 has the effect of preventing the disclosure, for any purpose other than the investigation, of any report of an accident provided to the MAIB, including the names of the ship owners. However, where an investigation has been ordered by the Chief Inspector, regulation 10 provides that a report is to be made publicly available. The following table therefore shows figures only for injuries and fatalities to crew of UK registered merchant vessels for which investigations have been concluded and a report published, as at 16 January 2004.

Owner Name	*(a) Injuries*	*(b) Fatalities*
1997		
Alderney Shipping Co Ltd.		1
J. R. Rix and Sons Ltd.		1
Lowline Ltd.	6	
Orcargo		1
Princess Cruises Inc.	1	
Vector Offshore Ltd.	1	
Viking Standby Ltd.	1	
Total	9	3
1998		
P&O European Ferries	2	1
P&O Stena Line Ltd.		1
Total	2	2
1999		
RFA		1
Lowline Ltd.		1
Nomis Shipping Ltd.	2	
Total	2	2
2000		
P&O European Ferries	2	
P&O Stena Line Ltd.	1	
P&O Stena Line Shipmanagement Ltd.	4	
Shetlands Islands Council		1
Total	7	1
2001		
Eidesvik Shipping UK Ltd.		1
Princess Cruises		1
Turk Phoenix Ltd.		1
Total		3

Owner Name	(a) Injuries	(b) Fatalities
2002		
Cunard Line Ltd.	1	1
P&O North Sea Ferries Ltd.	1	
Total	1	1
2003		
Hanson Aggregates Marine Ltd.		1
Total	1	0

Note:
1. Accidents to shore based workers onboard ships in port/drydock are reported to HSE, not MAIB.
2. There is no general requirement for foreign flagged vessels, even in UK waters, to report onboard accidents to personnel to UK authorities.

Mr. Paul Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* injuries and *(b)* fatalities to workers on ships there were in each year since 1997. [148487]

Mr. Jamieson: Figures for the number of crew killed and injured on UK registered merchant vessels, reported to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch of DfT by 15 January 2004, are as follows:

	Killed	Injured
1997	5	329
1998	2	320
1999	4	278
2000	3	305
2001	3	287
2002	5	301
2003	2	261

Notes:
1. Accidents to shore based workers on board ships in port/dry dock are reported to HSE, not MAIB.
2. There is no general requirement for foreign flagged vessels, even in UK waters, to report on-board accidents to personnel to UK authorities.
3. The number of UK flagged merchant vessels increased by more than 20 per cent. between 2001 and 2003.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions, in each year since 1990, powers to direct a ship to leave UK waters have been used, giving in each case the reason for the direction. [148848]

Mr. Jamieson: The powers to direct a ship to leave UK waters have only been used on one occasion. On 19 July 1999, a direction was issued to the MV Rainbow Warrior for the purpose of securing the safety of the ship and of other ships, persons on the ship and other ships, and other persons and property.

Aviation

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further sanctions are available to his Department to recover fines where an airline has been banned from United Kingdom airspace due to non-payment of fines. [148960]

Mr. McNulty: The recovery of charges due under Carriers Liability legislation in respect of passengers arriving in the United Kingdom without the required documents is the responsibility of the Home Office. Such charges may be recoverable through the courts as a debt. However, if a carrier was not operating to the United Kingdom, the enforceability of a court's judgment would be a relevant consideration in deciding whether to pursue this course.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reduce the charges levied on users of British airspace as a result of the transfer of responsibility for aviation safety regulation from the UK CAA to the European Aviation Safety Agency. [149596]

Mr. McNulty: Regulation (EC) No. 1592/2002, establishing the European Aviation Safety Agency, applies to the design, production, and airworthiness of aircraft and aircraft products, together with associated personnel and organisations. It has no bearing on the way British airspace is managed or the charges levied with respect to the use of British airspace.

The Agency took up its safety regulatory duties on 28 September 2003, and for the time being, has authorised national aviation administrations, including the UK CAA, to carry out tasks on its behalf under national charging schemes. Until the Agency has established its own staff and processes, including a Regulation on fees and charges, we cannot estimate the precise effect on the work of the CAA. The CAA intends to review with UK industry the impact that EASA will have on the costs of its Safety Regulation Group and the associated charges to UK industry.

Bus Travel

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his plans to work with the Office of Fair Trading to clarify the position on the ability of bus companies and local authorities to offer through ticketing arrangements permitting cross-boundary travel by encouraging reciprocal arrangements. [148277]

Mr. McNulty: These matters are regularly discussed between my right hon. Friend and the Chairman of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

Car Insurance

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of *(a)* the number of people driving on roads in England and Wales without adequate insurance cover in each of the last five years and *(b)* trends in driving without insurance in recent years. [148738]

Mr. Jamieson: Current estimates from the insurance industry are that there are about 1.25 million motorists driving while uninsured. No estimates are available for earlier years. Figures for convictions for uninsured driving show an average yearly increase of 1.2 per cent. since 1998.

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has made of the average cost to the insurance premium holder in each of the last five years of driving without insurance. [148740]

Mr. Jamieson: For the year 2002 the cost to each motorist's insurance premium is estimated at between £15 and £30. However, no figures are available for previous years.

Flight Paths

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance his Department has issued to airlines in respect of flight paths that take commercial aircraft above 30,000 feet. [148589]

Mr. McNulty: The Department has not issued any guidance. When designing air traffic services routes, airspace planners are bound by the provisions of guidance material contained in the ICAO Air Traffic Services Planning Manual—Doc. 9426. In addition, the operational approval and aircraft certification given by the Civil Aviation Authority to aircraft operators covers the operation of aircraft at all phases of flight at any level.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what environmental assessment has been made of the *(a)* benefits and *(b)* disbenefits of commercial aircraft flying at (i) 20,000, (ii) 25,000, (iii) 30,000 and (iv) 35,000 feet. [148590]

Mr. McNulty: No specific assessment has been made of the benefits and disbenefits of flight at these altitudes. However, research jointly undertaken by DLR (the German aerospace agency) and Manchester Metropolitan University within the European research project, TRADEOFF, looked at the hypothetical impact of reducing cruise altitudes on contrail coverage and its radiative forcing (a measure of the climate impact), as well as the effect of increased fuel consumption (and hence CO^2 emissions). The research concluded that flying at lower cruise altitudes reduced contrail formation but increased fuel consumption.

Any detailed assessment would have to explore these trade-offs further. The research was not intended to suggest changes in operating practices, which would need full international agreement.

Kazahkstan (Air Transport)

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to argue, in his discussions with the Government of Kazahkstan, that a charter service from Uralsk to Amsterdam cannot be considered as a replacement for a service from Uralsk to London; what recent discussions he has had on this matter; and if he will make a statement. [149485]

Mr. McNulty: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 14 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 745W.

We are pursuing this matter with the Kazakh Government. Our objective is to ensure that the services offered by airlines meet passenger demands and that no unreasonable obstacles are put in the way of those services.

Lower Airspace Radar Service

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) why he has initiated a regulatory impact assessment on the funding of his Lower Airspace Radar Service; and if he will make a statement; [149597]

(2) what plans he has to charge general aviation users for the Lower Airspace Radar Service. [149598]

Mr. McNulty: The Secretary of State has not initiated a regulatory impact assessment on this matter as funding of the Lower Airspace Radar Service (LARS) is the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) through its Directorate of Airspace Policy.

I understand that the CAA will shortly be issuing a consultation document setting out the options for the future funding of the service.

Roads

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his estimate is of the proportion of congestion on roads in England and Wales which is caused by poorly planned and lengthy street works carried out *(a)* by utilities and *(b)* by or on behalf of highway authorities. [145530]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 5 January 2004]*: The Department does not hold figures for the proportion of congestion cause by street works that are poorly planned or lengthy, whether carried out by utilities or highway authorities. However, Transport Research Laboratory figures indicate that all types of road and utility works cause around 10 per cent. of congestion on the Highways Agency's Trunk Road and Motorway system. The proportion of this carried out by Utility Companies is under 2 per cent.

The Department does not hold equivalent figures for local roads. Relatively little utility apparatus is located under motorways and trunk roads. Therefore, congestion caused by utility works on local authority roads will be significantly higher than the equivalent figure for Highways Agency roads given above.

David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the Highways Agency's budget was spent on road maintenance projects in *(a)* 2002 and *(b)* 2003. [149147]

Mr. Jamieson: The proportion spent in 2002–03 and forecast to be spent in 2003–04 is about 46 per cent.

David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what major improvements are planned to the trunk road network. [148927]

Mr. Jamieson: The Highways Agency's Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI) to the trunk road and motorway network currently comprises 72 schemes each costing more than £5 million. These are:

A1(M) Ferrybridge—Hook Moor (under construction)
A1(M) Wetherby—Walshford (under construction)
A2—Cobham Phase 1 (under construction)
A2 Bean—Cobham Phase 2
A2/A282 Dartford Improvement
A5 Weeford—Fazeley Improvement
A10 Wadesmill Colliers End (under construction)
A14 Rookery Crossroads Grade Separated Junction
A21 Lamberhurst Bypass (under construction)
A34 Chieveley/M4 J13 Improvement (under construction)
A63 Selby By-pass (under construction)

A120 Stansted – Braintree Improvement (under construction)
A249 Iwade – Queenborough Improvement
A303 Stonehenge
A421 Great Barford By-pass
A500 City Road and Stoke Junction Improvement
M25 J12–15 Widening (under construction)
M60 J5–8 Widening (under construction)
A1 Attleborough By-pass
All Fiveways – Thetford Improvement
A47 Thorney By-pass
M6 Carlisle to Guardsmill extension
A63 Melton Grade Separated Junction
A14 Haughley New St – Stowmarket Improvement
A3 Hindhead Improvement
A38 Dobwalls By-pass
A595 Parton – Lillyhall Improvement
A1 Peterborough – Blyth Grade Separated Junctions
M62 Junction 6 Improvement
A46 Newark – Widmerpool Improvement
A30 Bodmin Indian Queens
A483 Pant – Llanymynech Bypass
A5117/A550 Deeside Park Junctions Improvement
A419 Blunsdon
A66 Temple Sowerby and Improvement at Winderwath
A1 Dishforth to Leeming
A1 Bramham – Wetherby (Including Wetherby By-pass)
A1 Leeming to Barton
A64 Rillington By-pass
M40/A404 Handy Cross Junction Improvement
A47 Blofield to North Burlingham Dualling
A66 Greta Bridge to Stephen Bank Improvement
A66 Carkin Moor to Scotch Corner Improvement
A428 Caxton Common to Hardwick Improvement
A30/A382 Merrymeet Junction
A66 Long Newton Junction
A1 Stannington Junction (under construction)
A69 Haydon Bridge By-pass
A419 Commonhead Junction
M4 Junction 18 Eastbound Diverge
M5 Junctions 17–18 Northbound Climbing Lane
M5 Junctions 19–20 Southbound Climbing Lane
M5 Junctions 19–20 Northbound Climbing Lane
M1 Junction 19
A14 Ellington – Fen Ditton Improvement
A57/A628 Mottram in Longdendale, Hollingworth and Tintwistle By-pass
A45/A46 Tollbar End Improvement
M1 Junction 6a to 10 Widening
M1 Junction 10 to 13 Widening
A1 Morpeth to Felton Dualling
A1 Adderstone to Belford Dualling
A1/A19/A1068 Seaton Burn Junction Improvement
A19/A184 Testos Grade Separated Junction
A505 Dunstable Northern Bypass (A5 to M1 Link)
A421 Bedford to M1 Junction 13
A21 Tonbridge to Pembury
M40 Junction 15 (Longbridge)
A64 Colton Lane Grade Separated Junction
A590 High and Low Newton By-pass
M20 Junction 10A
A30 Garland Cross to Chiverton Cross
A30 Temple to Higher Carblake Improvement

Speed Cameras

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how sums of money raised in fines from speed cameras in Essex which have exceeded the totals spent on purchasing and operating speed cameras in Essex have been spent in each of the five years prior to 2001–02; and whether these sums have been allocated to another Department. [149383]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 20 January 2004]*: Prior to the start of the cost recovery system to fund safety camera activity in 2000–01 all revenue from speeding fines was passed to the Consolidated Fund at HM Treasury.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answers of 6 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 215W and 216W, and his answer of 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 676–7W, how the £520,357, that was collected in fines from speed cameras that was not spent in purchasing and operating speed cameras in Essex in 2001–02, was spent; and whether this sum was allocated to another Department. [149384]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 20 January 2004]*: Under the netting off scheme the amount returned to the safety camera partnership can only cover the cost of purchasing and operating safety cameras. The rest is passed to the Consolidated Fund at HM Treasury.

London Underground

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has made representations to Transport for London regarding *(a)* reliability and *(b)* comfort, under each of the PPP contracts for the London Underground. [149014]

Mr. McNulty: The Department for Transport has not made specific representations to Transport for London on either of these issues. I have regular meetings with the Mayor for London, London Underground and Transport for London. At these meetings a wide range of issues are discussed, including the operational performance of the Underground and the delivery of improvements to the network.

WALES

Student Finance

9. **Kevin Brennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary on the devolution of higher education funding for students to the National Assembly for Wales. [148359]

Mr. Hain: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Ian Lucas) today.

National Minimum Wage

10. **Mr. Caton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the national minimum wage in Wales. [148360]

Mr. Hain: Around 60,000 people in Wales stood to benefit from the introduction of the National Minimum Wage in April 1999 and for the increases since.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

11. **Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with North Wales police authority about reducing the numbers held in police cells in north Wales. [148361]

Mr. Touhig: My right hon. Friend and I have regular discussions with representatives of the police forces in Wales.

Cells are normally used only to accommodate people who need to be held in custody by the police. Occasionally, prison inmates are held overnight because they cannot reach their prison by a reasonable time, or to facilitate their return to court the next day.

Local Government Finance

12. **Mr. Gray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the First Secretary about the Barnett formula. [148362]

Mr. Hain: I have regular meetings with the First Minister to discuss funding arrangements for Wales. The Barnett formula is a means of calculating changes to the Welsh Block from its historic base.

NHS Funding

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the National Assembly for Wales Government on the funding of the NHS in Wales. [148357]

Mr. Hain: I have met the First Minister and the Assembly Health Minister in recent weeks to discuss the NHS and health provision in Wales.

Since 1997, funding for the NHS across the UK has increased; in Wales the 2004–05 budget for health will be almost 95 per cent. more than in 1996–97.

In Wales, as in the rest of the UK, this has resulted in greater numbers of doctors and nurses, improved services and more patients being treated.

DEFENCE

Airfield Support Service Project

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the estimated aggregate costs incurred by the three bidding consortia for the Airfield Support Service Project are. [149057]

Mr. Ingram: Actual costs incurred by the three bidding consortia are not known to the Department and are a matter for the consortia themselves.

Al Yamamah

Mrs. Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the 1992 National Audit Office report about the Al Yamamah programme. [149510]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 20 January 2004]*: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 12 February 2003, *Official Report*, column 735W.

Armed Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he intends to make in relation to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme and compensation to ensure that *(a)* a beneficiary is guaranteed five years' worth of payments notwithstanding earlier death and *(b)* lump sum payments to give effect to such guarantee are not taxed at a 35 per cent. rate. [149152]

Mr. Caplin: The decision of the new Armed Forces Pension Scheme includes a provision to allow a lump sum payment to a spouse or partner of up to five years' pension payments, less the lump sum received on retirement and pension payments up to the date of death, if a member dies after retirement but within five years of the pension coming into payment. The Government propose in "Simplifying the taxation of pensions: the Government's proposals", published on 10 December 2003, that such payments should be taxed at 35 per cent. The Ministry of Defence will be considering the benefit proposal further in the light of the taxation arrangements.

Army

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the budget for army combat arms training was in each month since January 2001. [148870]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 19 January 2004]*: Army combat arms training has been taken to encompass individual training for all personnel at Phase 1 (initial) training (which will include individuals who go on to serve in non-combat arms), and individual training at phase 2 (specialist) and phase 3 (career and development) training for personnel serving in the Royal Armoured Corps, the Royal Artillery, the Infantry, and the School of Army Aviation. LAND Command undertakes collective training for the whole Army but cannot identify specific costs associated with such training for combat arms. The sums shown include an element for HQ Admin costs etc., which cannot easily be separated out, but exclude all salary costs of trainees, which are accounted for separately. The figures are as follows:

Month	*£ million*
April 2001	27.599
May 2001	28.447
June 2001	31.833
July 2001	30.378
August 2001	26.729
September 2001	27.676
October 2001	28.505
November 2001	29.591
December 2001	29.585
January 2002	29.409
February 2002	28.914
March 2002	30.046

Month	£ million
April 2002	29.777
May 2002	31.053
June 2002	31.142
July 2002	31.429
August 2002	30.959
September 2002	30.589
October 2002	31.957
November 2002	31.251
December 2002	31.126
January 2003	33.256
February 2003	29.879
March 2003	31.905
April 2003	32.660
May 2003	32.836
June 2003	27.767
July 2003	32.421
August 2003	28.732
September 2003	29.089
October 2003	32.559
November 2003	32.034
December 2003	28.318
January 2004	31.626
February 2004 (projected)	31.573
March 2004 (projected)	31.225

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many army musicians were obliged to down-rank on transferring to the Guards regiments from other regiments; and what effect this down ranking will have on these soldiers' pensions. [148963]

Mr. Caplin: Transfer to bands of the Guards Division is voluntary. Seventeen army musicians who volunteered to transfer and are still serving accepted reversion to the rank of Musician as a condition of transfer. Reversion in rank has not been a condition of transfer since April 2003.

Reversion in rank may affect an individual's pension award. Rank for the purpose of assessing pension entitlement is calculated by taking the highest paid rank held for an aggregate of two years or more during the last five years reckonable service.

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial restrictions have been placed on army recruiting. [148869]

Mr. Caplin *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* None.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will provide a substantive reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Totnes of 24 November 2003 about Mrs. Iris Griffiths of Kingsbridge and the Defence Export Services Organisation, which was acknowledged by his Department on 2 December 2003. [148721]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* My noble Friend Lord Bach wrote to the hon. Member on 15 January 2004.

Departmental Posts (Gibraltar)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* civilian and *(b)* service posts in his Department in Gibraltar will be (i) transferred to the private sector and (ii) removed. [148458]

Mr. Ingram: Headquarters British Forces Gibraltar is currently evaluating the most cost-effective method of delivering janitorial, catering and transportation services. Although under review, at this stage no decisions have been made to transfer posts to the private sector.

Routine local resource management plans are to make a reduction of 23 civilian and one service posts, over the next four years. We envisage that this will be achieved by a combination of natural wastage and voluntary early retirement.

Forces Personnel

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what statistical data his Department collates on the rate of marital break-up among forces personnel. [148150]

Mr. Caplin: Each service records, on individual pay and personnel documents, the marital status of its personnel using different marital categories. Analysis of marital break-ups and divorce rates is carried out on an ad hoc basis by analysing changes to the marital status of personnel.

Iraq

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the application of standards in the UN Basic Principles on the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials for law enforcement duties conducted by UK military personnel in Iraq. [141686]

Mr. Ingram: The practices adopted by United Kingdom military personnel in Iraq are consistent with the UN Basic Principles for the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials, despite the fact that we are operating in circumstances rather different from those in which it was intended to be applied.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what mechanisms are in place to ensure the *(a)* impartiality and *(b)* independence of investigations into non-combatant deaths in Iraq. [141687]

Mr. Ingram: In exercising their constabulary powers the Royal Military Police (RMP) are independent of the Army's chain of command. At the conclusion of any RMP investigation, a report together with supporting evidence is submitted to the appropriate commanding officer and to the Army Legal Services—ALS. ALS will then advise the commanding officer whether there is a prima facie case for disciplinary action. In serious cases, ALS will advise the commanding officer on the procedure for referral to a higher authority and, if appropriate, on to the Army Prosecuting Authority—APA. The APA is statutorily independent of the chain of command. The independence of the APA was confirmed in the European Court of Human Rights in the Cooper Case last December.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the soldier's card issued to forces serving in Iraq. [147676]

Mr. Ingram: The soldier's card contains information about the Rules of Engagement. It is not our practice to comment on Rules of Engagement and I am

withholding information regarding their contents under Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the contracts let to private contractors for the supply and support of UK troops in Iraq, stating in each case the nature and value of the contract; and if he will make a statement. [148004]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* I am withholding the information requested in accordance with Exemption 7 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information as it is commercial in confidence.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 8 January, *Official Report*, column 453W, on Iraq, when the Iraq Survey Group is to make its final recommendations. [148035]

Mr. Ingram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 12 January 2004, .*Official Report*, column 538W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Glenda Jackson).

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his strategy is for ensuring that children in Iraq do not come into contact with depleted uranium. [148055]

Mr. Ingram: British forces are taking the following actions to minimise the risk posed to civilians by Depleted Uranium (DU):

DU fragments on the surface are being removed from the battlefield as they are discovered.

Local people have been warned through signs and leaflets that they should not go near, or touch, any debris they find on the battlefield.

Military vehicles known to have been hit by DU munitions within the southern sector of Iraq under British military control have been clearly marked.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in the Iraq Survey Group. [148064]

Mr. Hoon: On 16 January 2004, there were 1,272 people employed in the Iraq Survey Group.

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 9,100 ISO containers used for Operation TELIC are missing and unaccounted for by his Department. [148868]

Mr. Ingram *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* To date 9,595 ISO containers have been supplied in support of Operation TELIC. Of this number 5,793 currently remain in use on the operation.

The balance of 3,802 have either been returned, re-tasked or are awaiting return to either the MOD or to the leasing companies as appropriate.

At present we have 73 containers, 0.76 per cent. of the original amount, unaccounted for. It is expected that the next information update from theatre will identify the locations of the majority of these containers and that they will either be in transit or have been re-tasked.

It is stressed that it is unusual to lose a container totally. It is far more likely that it would have been re-tasked or returned and that a delay has occurred in getting the relevant information back to the Defence Container Management Service.

Tony Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what number and percentage of Army Medical Service reserve personnel have left the service following Operation Telic. [149350]

Mr. Caplin: Although we do not hold figures for the number of people leaving the Army Medical Services Territorial Army (AMS TA) overall, I can confirm that 240 Professionally Qualified Officers, from Role 3 reserve medical units (field hospitals) have left the TA over the last 12 months. This represents approximately 13 per cent. of these units. Very few of these individuals gave Operation Telic, or the risk of mobilisation, as their primary reason for leaving. Over the same period, approximately 300 people joined the same units.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the other national contingents under the command of 3 (UK) Division; [143729]

(2) if he will list the countries involved in the Multinational Division (South-East) (MND(SE) in the South Iraq provinces of Basra, Maysen, Dhi Qar and Al Muthanna. [143730]

Mr. Ingram: 3 (UK) Division formally handed over headquarters duties to the Multinational Division (South East) on 28 December 2003.

In addition to United Kingdom forces the following nations currently contribute a combined total of around 5,200 personnel to the Multinational Division: Italy; Denmark; Norway; Netherlands; Czech Republic; Portugal; Romania; New Zealand; Lithuania; Japan and Iceland.

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the failure rate of the bomblets in the cluster munitions his Department purchased from BAe Systems in 2003; whether the use of these munitions in Iraq has contributed to the assessment; and if he will make a statement. [146431]

Mr. Ingram: No cluster artillery shells purchased from BAe Systems in 2003 were used in Iraq during Operation Telic. The ammunition used during Operation Telic was from a procurement made in 1996. No assessment of cluster artillery shells was carried out in Iraq.

However, each batch of these munitions procured is subject to acceptance proof firing. This requires a statistically viable sample of each batch to be fired and monitored. The area is then searched by the manufacturer's Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel to identify and report any bomblet failures. All ammunition lots we have procured have met the requirements. Other testing involves a random sample of the Self Destruct Fuze being independently tested by the manufacturer prior to assembly. Again, all these fuzes have met the requirements.

Procurement

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contractors' bid costs have been refunded in full, or in part, as a result of procurement competitions being terminated or substantially altered since 1997; in how many cases compensation has been paid; what the total value of such payments is; and if he will make a statement. [147957]

Mr. Ingram: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost (Exemption 9 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information).

In the event that a procurement competition was terminated or substantially altered consideration would be given, on a case-by-case basis, to whether to reimburse bid costs.

Reservists

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* full-time reservists with full commitment contracts, *(b)* full-time reservists with limited commitment contracts, *(c)* full-time reservists with home commitment contracts and *(d)* volunteer reservists have been called out on active duty in each year since 1997; and what the average active duty service time has been for each category. [148669]

Mr. Caplin: The Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) commitment was established in 1998.

The numbers of FTRS personnel called out for permanent service by the Royal Navy (including Royal Marines) and Royal Air Force since 1998 are detailed in the following table. The Army does not keep a separate record of FTRS personnel called out for permanent service.

	FTRS full commitment	*FTRS limited commitment*	*FTRS home commitment*
1998	0	0	0
1999	0	0	0
2000	0	0	0
2001	2	2	0
2002	3	2	0
2003	18	56	0

These figures do not include those personnel who, as part of their FTRS commitment, served on operations.

We have been unable to distinguish between the forms of service that reservists were undertaking when mobilised. Therefore, the figures detailed as follows cover all reservists mobilised.

	Number of reservists mobilised
1997	980
1998	840
1999	1,400
2000	1,120
2001	920
2002	1,720
2003	9,550

A central record of the average period of mobilised service that each category has served since 1997 is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, in 2003 for Operation TELIC reservists would have been mobilised for between seven and nine months (this includes pre-deployment training and post-deployment leave).

Service Accommodation

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many married quarters *(a)* were released to Annington Homes in each year since 1996 and *(b)* are projected to be released in each of the next five years; what the location is in each case; and what factors influence decisions on releases. [146516]

Mr. Caplin: Within the Defence Housing Executive's (DHE) overall disposal programme, the following numbers of properties have been handed back to Annington Homes, following the sale of the bulk of the family estate in 1996:

	Properties
1997	8
1998	1,366
1999	1,188
2000	2,679
2001	2,640
2002	2,366
2003	1,513

At the time of the overall sale and leaseback in 1996, 2,373 properties were released to Annington Homes. Subsequently, a total of 11,760 properties have been handed back at over 300 sites across England and Wales. A further 560 properties are due to be handed back by the end of March 2004.

Territorial Army

Mr. Swayne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Territorial Army serving in *(a)* 2 Signals Brigade and *(b)* its subordinate units have been mobilised during Operation Telic. [149422]

Mr. Caplin: One hundred and sixty six members of the Territorial Army who serve in either 2 Signals Brigade, or its subordinate units, have been deployed on Operation TELIC.

Timber

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 277W, how many and what percentage of contracts issued by his Department since August 2002 which involved the use of wood have not complied with the Defence Contract Condition (DEFCON) 691. [148847]

Mr. Caplin: The Ministry of Defence places in excess of 30,000 contracts per annum. MOD commercial staff are advised to include the Defence Contract Condition (DEFCON) 691 in all relevant contracts that may involve the supply or consumption of timber. However, if it is clear that performance of contracts does not involve the supply or consumption of timber, then

DEFCON 691 need not be called up. The MOD does not keep central records of the number of contracts, which contain DEFCON 691.

University Places (Service Sponsorships)

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he and his officials have had with the Department for Education and Skills on the impact of the introduction of top-up fees on service sponsorships for university places. [149042]

Mr. Caplin: None.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact of the introduction of top-up fees on the provision of service sponsorships for university places. [149043]

Mr. Caplin: No assessment has yet been made.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chechnya

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department's approach to the human rights issue in Chechnya includes representations to the Chechen Government. [149160]

Mr. Rammell: The UK's representations over human rights in Chechnya have, to date, been made to representatives of the Russian Federal Government, rather than to local authorities.

Hebron Rehabilitation Committee

Sir Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial support the United Kingdom has given to the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee; and if he will make a statement. [149096]

Mr. Straw: The UK has not given any financial support to the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee. However, we are aware of their valuable work restoring the old city of Hebron, and have in the past lobbied the Government of Israel to ensure the Committee's work is not obstructed.

Israel

Dr. Tonge: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government concerning the welfare of animals denied access to Palestinian pasture lands since the construction of the security wall. [148902]

Mr. Rammell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 19 November 2003, *Official Report*, column 1054W. As we made clear then, we have serious concerns about the impact of the fence on the daily life of those Palestinians directly affected. We are particularly concerned at the impact the establishment of a closed zone has had on access to basic services, including health and education in the area, and on the ability of Palestinian farmers to cultivate farmland and care for their livestock.

Migrant Workers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what correspondence he has received since 1 July 2003 on the coming into force of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and what steps remain to be taken before UK ratification of the Treaty. [149249]

Mr. Rammell: The Government have received communication from a variety of sources seeking UK ratification. However, we have no plans to ratify the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The scope of the Convention is wider than the UK's existing immigration laws. Incorporating it into UK law would imply fundamental changes to our legislation and would undermine the UK's system of frontier control.

The Government consider they have already struck the right balance between the need for immigration control and the protection of the interests and rights of migrant workers.

Rwanda and Burundi

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made to assist *(a)* Rwanda and *(b)* Burundi to bring those guilty of crimes against humanity to justice; and if he will make a statement. [148856]

Mr. Mullin: We are working with the Rwandan Government to develop and begin implementation of a strategy for legal and judicial reform; implement the "gacaca" process of local justice in all provinces: and work constructively with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. In Burundi, during 2003–04 we are contributing £5.7 million towards the cost of the African Union's peace-keeping force. We are also encouraging the UN to look at ways in which the international community can support post-conflict justice.

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being provided to *(a)* Rwanda and *(b)* Burundi to fight terrorism; and if he will make a statement. [148857]

Mr. Mullin: We are not providing direct assistance to Burundi and Rwanda to fight terrorism, but we are helping Rwanda with security sector reform and looking at the possibility of doing so in Burundi. We currently assess the threat from international terrorism in Burundi and Rwanda as low, but this is kept under careful review.

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support is being provided to efforts to initiate the peace process in Burundi; and if he will make a statement. [148859]

Mr. Mullin: The UK has increased its engagement in Burundi since the signing of the Arusha agreement in 2000, providing both political and financial support. We are working with the EU, UN and regional partners to consolidate the peace process to support peace-building activities, including the African Mission in Burundi, and long-term recovery and poverty reduction.

In 2003–04, the UK has made a total of £11.6 million available for Burundi, including £5.7 million to support the African Union-led peace-keeping force.

Sunset Clauses

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy on the use of sunset clauses in legislation; and which Acts containing such clauses relevant to his Department were passed in each year since 1997. [149331]

Mr. Straw: Whether a sunset clause is needed in legislation depends on the circumstance of each Bill. In the case of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), much of our legislation is to implement HMG's international obligations, so if those obligations do not have a specific time limit, a limit in our domestic legislation would not be appropriate. No Acts of Parliament since 1997 for which the FCO is responsible contained a sunset clause.

United Nations

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the deadlines were for payment of regular budget contributions to the United Nations for each year since 1993; and when the United Kingdom made these payments in each year. [148667]

Mr. Rammell: The United Nations Secretariat issues invoices for contributions to the Regular Budget at the end of December each year, following the conclusion of General Assembly business in the fifth committee. Contributions are due within 30 days of receipt of invoice.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office pays 25 per cent. of its assessed contribution in January and the remaining 75 per cent. in April, in keeping with Treasury rules on expenditure which falls across financial years.

Western Sahara

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with representatives of *(a)* the UN, *(b)* the Government of Morocco and *(c)* the Polisario concerning the future government of the Western Sahara; and if he will make a statement. [148299]

Mr. Rammell: We regularly discuss the situation in Western Sahara with our contacts at all levels in the United Nations, the Moroccan Government and the Polisario.

Most recently, my noble Friend the Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean discussed Western Sahara and other issues with the Moroccan Deputy Foreign Minister, Fassi-Fihri, at his request when he was in London on 6 January.

Zimbabwe

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has received from Zimbabwean journalists on issues surrounding freedom of the press in that country. [149159]

Mr. Mullin: The British Embassy in Harare has regular contact with a wide range of journalists in Zimbabwe, including those from independent newspapers. I met a senior delegation from the Daily News during their November 2003 visit to the UK. We condemn the Government of Zimbabwe's attempts to block press freedoms in Zimbabwe, and the state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses which accompany their misguided policies. We will continue to do all we can to defend freedom of speech and of the press in Zimbabwe.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Directorships

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister for Women if she will make a statement on the number of women holding directorships in FTSE 100 companies; and what this represents as a percentage of the total number of directors. [148398]

Ms Hewitt *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* The number of female directorships has reached 101 in 2003, up by 20 per cent. on the previous year. Women now account for 9 per cent. of FTSE 100 board members and nearly 4 per cent. are in executive roles.

The Higgs and Tyson reports, which the Government commissioned last year, looked at a number of aspects for improving the overall performance of company boards. The Higgs Review reported on how the quality, independence, and effectiveness of non-executive directors may be strengthened; and the Tyson Report subsequently considered how companies could pursue recruitment of directors from broader and more diverse backgrounds.

The Government strongly support all efforts to improve the diversity and effectiveness of company boards. Since November, my right hon. Friend the Deputy Minister for Women and Equality and I have been meeting Chairs, Chief Executives and senior figures from business to raise awareness about the business case for greater diversity on UK boards and to gather examples of good practice already in place, which we plan to disseminate further to companies, professional bodies and executive recruitment firms.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Gambling Bill

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the expected timetable is for the draft Gambling Bill after the consultation period ends. [149482]

Mr. Caborn: After taking account of the recommendations of the Joint Committee, which is now scrutinising the draft Bill, and of the points made in our

wider public consultation on its provisions, we intend to amend its provisions as necessary and to introduce a Bill as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many people employed in her Department have claimed statutory sick pay for *(a)* less than one week, *(b)* one to three weeks, *(c)* four to six weeks, *(d)* seven to 12 weeks, *(e)* 13 to 20 weeks and *(f)* 21 to 28 weeks in each year since 1997. [148631]

Mr. Caborn: This information is not held within the Department and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. For civil servants generally, sick absence may be allowed on full pay for up to six months. Departments are responsible for paying Statutory Sick Pay to staff for up to 28 weeks as a proportion of their full pay.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

McClean Review

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, representing the Church Commissioners when he expects the publication of the first report of the McClean Review into clergy terms of service to the Archbishops' Council. [149477]

Sir Stuart Bell: The report of the McClean Group will be published and copies sent to members of the Church of England's General Synod on 23 January. A copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library and I will also ensure my hon. Friend receives one.

PRIME MINISTER

11 September

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has made to President Bush about assistance for families of British victims of events on 11 September 2001 in pursuing inquiries into those events. [149500]

The Prime Minister: We have had extensive discussions with the US Government, at many levels, about circumstances surrounding the events of 11 September 2001. An independent commission of inquiry in the US into pre-11 September intelligence is also taking place.

The Government remains ready to help UK relatives of 11 September victims in their dealings with the US Government in any way that we can.

Iraq

Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister whether the United Kingdom has shared with the United States Administration and US intelligence services the information on alleged Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from Niger, to which he referred in his letters of 1 September 2003 and 28 October 2003 to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. [149538]

The Prime Minister: Exchanges between UK intelligence officials and their opposite numbers in the US are confidential and it would not be appropriate to provide any farther details beyond those we have already provided.

TREASURY

Aggregates Levy

David Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment has been made of the impact of the aggregates levy since its introduction on the quarrying industry in *(a)* the East Midlands and *(b)* the United Kingdom; [148961]

(2) when the level of the aggregates levy was last reviewed; [148962]

(3) what assessment he has made of the impact the aggregates levy has had since its introduction on *(a)* the extraction of virgin aggregates and *(b)* the use of secondary aggregates in (i) the East Midlands and (ii) the UK; [148972]

(4) what plans there are to review the level of the aggregates levy; [148975]

(5) what assessment has been made of the impact of the aggregates levy since its introduction in *(a)* the East Midlands and *(b)* the UK. [149143]

John Healey: An update on the Government's current assessment of the impact of the aggregates levy was in the pre-Budget report (Cm 6042). Monitoring of the aggregates levy takes the form of a rolling programme of research and analysis of data as it becomes available. It encompasses all regions of the UK and it takes account of data from specific research, such as the Government-commissioned Symonds Report on the levy's impact in Northern Ireland, as well as information from business organisations, individual companies, environment groups and site visits by officials.

Emerging evidence suggests that overall primary aggregates extraction has fallen since the levy's introduction; for example, the total outputs from the Annual Minerals Raised Inquiry for Great Britain for 2002 show a decrease of 5.7 per cent. on the 2001 figures. While there are a number of factors affecting extraction levels, it is clear that the levy has played a significant part in encouraging that reduction.

The rate of the aggregates levy is reviewed annually as part of the Budget process.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr. Moss: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the *(a)* percentage rate and *(b)* actual tax revenue for air passenger duty was in each year since 1994. [149224]

John Healey: *(a)* Air passenger duty is not set as a percentage rate but as a monetary amount. Current air passenger duty rates are as follows.

£

	EEA Destinations	Non-EEA Destinations
Standard Rate	10	40
Reduced Rate	5	20

(b) Air passenger duty revenues for 2002–03 were £816 million and are published in HM Customs and Excise's Annual Report (HC52). Historic revenue figures can be found in table 2.1D of Financial Statistics published by the Office for National Statistics.

Barnett Formula

Adam Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what amounts *(a)* the Welsh Block and *(b)* the Scottish Block has been changed as a consequence of change in public funding for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew through the operation of the Barnett formula for each of the last six years. [148309]

Mr. Boateng: Changes in the Welsh and Scottish Blocks are determined through the Barnett formula, details of which were published in the Statement of Funding Policy in July 2002. The Barnett formula provides the devolved Administrations with aggregate increases reflecting a population share of overall increases in UK Government Departments' provision.

Charitable Donations (Developing Countries)

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the level of charitable donations from the United Kingdom to developing countries in each of the last five years. [149156]

John Healey: The Government conduct a survey every year of non-Governmental organisations which provide assistance to developing countries. Aid flows from voluntary agencies are estimated from a statistical inquiry conducted annually by DfID in line with current survey control policy. The following table sets out the figures for the years 1998 to 2002.

Expenditure by voluntary organisations in developing countries

£ million

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total expenditure	397	495	534	456	482
of which:					
Officially funded	143	175	170	207	221
Funded by other UK agencies	1	22	9	24	26
Privately funded	253	298	354	225	235

Source:
Voluntary agencies surveys of 1999–2003. The private element is published in DfID's annual publication "Statistics on International Development".

Civil Service (Disabled People)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the number of employees in his Department who have a disability, broken down by disability type. [148995]

Ruth Kelly: 5,247 of the 98,770 staff employed by the Treasury, Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise have declared a disability.

	Number
HM Treasury	
Capacity	10
Co-ordination	7
Hearing	9
Learning	4
Mentally ill	1
Mobility	7
Speech	2
Visual	4
Total number	44
HM Customs and Excise	
Hearing Impairment—and other	20
Hearing Impairment—alone	110
Learning difficulties—alone	23
Learning difficulties—and other	7
Mental illness—alone	32
Mobility impairment—and other	48
Mobility impairment—alone	126
Physical co-ordination—alone	31
Physical co-ordination—and other	22
Reduced phys. capacity—and other	70
Reduced phys. capacity—alone	256
Severe disfigurement—and other	1
Severe disfigurement—alone	1
Speech impairment—and other	2
Speech impairment—alone	8
Status unknown	43
Unknown disability	106
Visual impairment—and other	16
Visual impairment—alone	61
Total number	983
Inland Revenue	
Unknown disability	1,126
Reduced physical capacity	729
Visual impairment	668
Mobility impairment	651
Hearing impairment	625
Mental illness	242
Learning difficulties	72
Speech impairment	46
Physical co-ordination difficulties	43
Severe disfigurement	11
Obsolete descriptions	8
Total number	4,220
Grand total	5,247

Correspondence

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to reply to the letter dated 5 November 2003 from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan regarding EU children's clothes VAT plans. [149781]

John Healey: I replied to the hon. Member on 14 January.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made of the effects of widening the VAT reduction to 5 per cent. on energy saving materials; [149099]

(2) if he will take steps to allow a stamp duty rebate at time of purchase for homebuyers installing energy efficiency measures; [149098]

(3) if he will introduce a new tax allowance for private landlords investing in energy efficiency. [149100]

John Healey: The Government are committed to improving household energy efficiency, as part of their programme to meet Energy White Paper targets. The Government routinely evaluate the impact of policy initiatives, including environmental tax measures. The Government have a long-standing commitment to pursue EU changes to permit a reduced rate of VAT for the DIY installation of energy saving materials, and have already applied a reduced rate of VAT for the installation of materials in certain other circumstances. The Government consulted on further measures to improve household energy efficiency in 2003, including a tax allowance for private landlords investing in energy efficiency. The Government also invited views on other possible policy initiatives. Responses were published and are being taken into account in further policy development. In the pre-Budget report (Cm 6042) we confirmed that we believe that there is a case for the further use of economic instruments as part of a package of measures to promote energy efficiency. A further announcement will be made around Budget 2004.

Excise Taxes

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with the European Commission on combating the evasion of excise taxes within the European Union. [148479]

John Healey: Treasury Ministers and officials from the Chancellor's Departments hold discussions with the European Commission and their counterparts from other EU member states on a wide range of issues, including the effective operation of the EU excise system.

Fuel Tax

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to increase the duty on liquefied petroleum gas; and if he will make a statement. [149417]

John Healey: In his Pre-Budget Report in December 2003 (Cm 6042), the Chancellor announced that the Government will gradually increase the duty rate for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) over the next three years, setting duty differentials on a path towards a level commensurate with the fuel's environmental benefits. Consistent with the Government's commitment to give three-year certainty on duty differentials for alternative fuels, the duty differentials for LPG for the next three years will be announced in Budget 2004.

Inland Revenue Code of Practice 26

John Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Inland Revenue's Code of Practice 26 will be made available to members of the public at local tax offices. [146331]

Dawn Primarolo: Code of Practice 26, "What happens when we have paid you too much tax credit?", is available to claimants via Inland Revenue Enquiry Centres. It is also available online at: www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/leaflets/credit.htm.

World Debt

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the terms and conditions relating to *(a)* loans made by the International Monetary Fund to third world countries and *(b)* debt cancellation. [149471]

John Healey: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) lends to low-income countries through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), a lending instrument offering softer terms than conventional IMF lending. Loans under the PRGF are based on a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is prepared by the country in co-operation with civil society and other development partners, in particular the World Bank. The UK believes that IMF loan conditions should reflect only what is necessary for the success of a program, to ensure the protection of IMF funds, and to meet the core requirements of the Fund's mandate. Conditions should be appropriate for a particular country. This is upheld in new guidelines on conditionality introduced by the IMF in September 2002 and the UK will work to ensure these guidelines remain appropriate and that they are upheld in practice.

The UK continues to be fully committed to the rapid and full implementation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to ensure that it delivers a robust exit from unsustainable debt for the world's poorest countries. To change the underlying dynamics of those countries in which debt indicators are deteriorating, it is important that—in addition to receiving debt relief—countries implement the reforms necessary to allow them to grow faster, to increase poverty reduction expenditure and to enable them to diversify their export bases and better absorb macroeconomic shocks, such as a decline in specific commodity prices. So far 27 countries have started to receive debt relief under the initiative, worth over US $70 billion. To be eligible for the HIPC Initiative, countries must be eligible for highly concessional assistance from the World Bank and the IMF, face an unsustainable debt situation after the full application of traditional debt relief mechanisms (such as application of Naples terms under the Paris Club agreement), and must make a commitment to poverty reduction through the implementation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The HIPC Initiative has an important role to play in maximising the resources available for poverty reduction in developing countries. However, unless there is an increase in the volume of resources available from donors to poor countries, additional debt relief would simply reallocate resources from one form of financing to another, and from non-HIPC poor countries to HIPC countries, without adding to the overall financing available for poverty reduction. Furthermore, all HIPC countries would still need additional aid to meet the Millennium Development Goals even if all of their debt from the World Bank and IMF were cancelled. That is why the UK's proposal for an International Finance Facility is so important. It could provide the much-needed substantial increase in resources which debt relief alone would not achieve and which could be disbursed by way of grants and additional debt relief.

Places of Worship/Historic Buildings

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the implementation of existing VAT Directives relating to the care of listed places of worship; [149491]

(2) what fiscal incentives his Department provides to support the maintenance of historic buildings; what plans he has to increase this support and if he will make a statement. [149490]

John Healey: In accordance with the rules laid down in the EC Sixth VAT Directive, the repair and maintenance of listed places of worship, and of all other buildings, is standard-rated for VAT purposes.

We have been negotiating hard with our European Partners to extend the categories of permitted reduced VAT rates to include the repair and maintenance of listed places of worship. Although at this time the future of these negotiations is uncertain, it remains one of the Government's objectives to achieve such a reduced rate.

In the meantime we continue to provide support through the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which provides an equivalent reduction in the cost of these repair projects. In his Pre-Budget Report the Chancellor announced that funding for the grant scheme is in place for a further two years, until the end of March 2006.

As well as the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, the Government provides a range of fiscal incentives to support the maintenance of historic buildings, including exemption from inheritance tax for heritage maintenance funds. The Government keeps all taxes under review and any changes are considered by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer as part of the annual Budget process.

Public Expenditure (Allocation within UK)

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the figures listed in Table 8.6b and 8.13b of the Corrigendum to Chapter 8 of the Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2003, what assessment he has made of the per capita cost of providing a parity of service provision in each region and nation of the United Kingdom with a view to determining which region/nation is receiving *(a)* more, *(b)* less and *(c)* the correct level of funding in each service programme. [149455]

Mr. Boateng: Spending by the devolved administrations is determined by the principles set out in the Statement of Funding Policy published by the Treasury in July 2002. Spending by region is determined by departments; there is no single allocation formula. Spending is determined according to the circumstances of the particular spending programme.

Scottish Executive

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he plans to make to determinants of the grant, other than the Barnett Formula, paid to the Scottish Executive in 2004. [149633]

Mr. Boateng: The Government's spending plans for 2004–05 were published in the 2002 Spending Review White Paper (Cm 5570). The grant to the Scottish Consolidated Fund for 2004–05 will be published in the Scotland Office chapter of the Department for Constitutional Affairs 2004–05 Departmental Report.

Sports Clubs

Mr. Reed: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many community and amateur sports clubs are registered for tax relief; [149366]

(2) what steps he is taking to promote the package of tax concessions available to community and amateur sports clubs; [149367]

(3) if he will estimate the number of community and amateur sports clubs eligible for tax concessions. [149368]

John Healey: It is estimated that between 30,000 and 40,000 clubs might be eligible to apply for registration as a community amateur sports club (CASC). As at 16 January 2004, 587 CASCs had been registered. A list of registered clubs is published on the Inland Revenue website, and is updated on a monthly basis.

In the Pre-Budget Report (Cm 6042) the Chancellor announced the Government's intention to double the Corporation Tax thresholds below which registered CASCs are exempt from tax. This will mean that clubs with a trading turnover of less than £30,000 and gross property income of less than £20,000 will pay no Corporation Tax. The measure will be introduced in the next Finance Bill.

Clubs registered in England and Wales will also receive mandatory rates relief of 80 per cent. with effect from 1 April 2004. Local authorities can increase this relief to 100 per cent. at their own discretion. These measures will help clubs raise funds to improve facilities for participating in sport, by reducing the burden placed upon them.

The Inland Revenue, in partnership with the Central Council of Physical Recreation; Bates, Wells & Braithwaite; Deloitte & Touche and others, held a series of regional seminars in 2003 to promote the CASC scheme. The Inland Revenue continues to work closely with representative bodies to encourage awareness of the scheme among their members.

The Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport also wrote to all Members of Parliament, including my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Reed), in December, encouraging them to promote the scheme to amateur sports clubs in their constituencies.

Telephone Charges

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was derived in 2002–03 by Government Departments and agencies from use of the 0870 telephone number which charges callers. [149599]

Mr. Boateng: Information about the use of 0870 services by Government Departments and agencies is not held centrally.

Thames Gateway Bridge

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Thames Gateway Bridge will be included in the comparator expenditure for the purposes of allocations under the Barnett Formula; and how much additional money will go to the devolved administrations as a result. [149643]

Mr. Boateng: Comparability factors for the purpose of allocations under the Barnett formula are published in Annex C of the Statement of Funding Policy. The latest version was published by the Treasury in July 2002. Comparability factors are updated in each Spending Review. Under the Barnett formula the devolved administrations receive a population share of comparable aggregate increases in departmental spending.

Tourism (VAT)

Mr. Moss: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the VAT rate on tourism services, with particular reference to tourist accommodation. [149225]

John Healey: The Chancellor keeps all tax matters under constant review, and I refer the hon gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 12 June 2003, *Official Report*, column 823W.

Trade Union Recognition Ballots

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what types of expenses accrued by a company campaigning against a trade union recognition ballot would be *(a)* tax deductible and *(b)* able to be offset against other tax liabilities; what the total amount of tax not paid in respect of such expenses has been in each of the last five years; and what plans he has to change the tax rules applying to such expenses. [149577]

Dawn Primarolo:

(a) Expenses which are deductible in computing a company's trading profits are those revenue expenses which are incurred wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the company's trade and which are not subject to a specific statutory prohibition.

(b) Such expenses cannot be set against other tax liabilities as such, but a trading loss created or augmented by such expenses may be set against other liabilities as permitted by statute.

We have no centrally available information on this matter.

Tax policy is kept under continuous review and any changes are announced by the Chancellor, usually at the time of the Budget.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum Seekers

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many induction centres for asylum seekers there are in the UK; and how many asylum seekers have been processed by induction centres since they opened. [147861]

Beverley Hughes: There are currently two induction centres open in the UK: Dover Induction Centre which opened in January 2002 and Yorkshire and Humberside which opened in June 2003. These two induction centres have processed about 26,700 asylum applicants collectively.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many induction centres for asylum seekers the Government plans to open; when they will open; and where. [147862]

Beverley Hughes: The Government plans to establish a network of induction centres in London and the regions during 2004. Negotiations with potential providers for further induction centres are ongoing so the exact locations and final number cannot be confirmed at this time. The final number will depend on the number of bedspaces each potential provider can deliver and capacity required will change to reflect changes in asylum intake. It is expected however that the network will consist of about eight induction centres.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers he expects will be processed by each induction centre; and what the expected cost is of each centre. [147863]

Beverley Hughes: When the national network of induction centres has been established it is expected that all asylum applicants will be processed through an induction centre, with the exception of detainees and those under Social Services care, for whom induction services will be tailored and delivered differently. Negotiations with potential providers are still ongoing and therefore information on the cost of each centre is not yet available. The number of asylum seekers processed by each centre depends on the number of bedspaces each centre can deliver and on asylum intake and dispersal rates.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of asylum seekers reached the UK in 2003 *(a)* as a result of illegal people-smuggling operations conducted by criminal gangs and *(b)* because they held false documentation. [148042]

Beverley Hughes: The nature of illegal entry is such that it is impossible to quantify. Illegal entrants are detected in a wide range of circumstances and time frames, from discovery in the back of a lorry on, or shortly after, arrival, to discovery much later, when found working. Although many of those discovered will claim asylum, no figures are kept centrally to differentiate between asylum seekers who arrive illegally, asylum seekers who arrive illegally as a result of criminal action, and illegal entrants generally.

The Government established the multi-agency Reflex strategy to tackle the criminality behind people smuggling, and will continue to support this strategy in tandem with increasingly effective border control measures, which saw a 52 per cent. reduction in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the UK in the 12 months from October 2002.

It is also not possible to quantify, except at disproportionate cost, the number of asylum seekers who reach the UK because they hold false documentation, although it is reasonable to conclude that many who do so arrive will claim asylum.

In the 12 months ending 30 September 2003, 8,446 false documents were detected at UK ports of entry.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has collated of links between the change in the number of asylum seekers and people traffickers. [148043]

Beverley Hughes: Government action led to a 52 per cent. reduction in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the UK in the 12 months from October 2002. Incidences of human trafficking to the UK remain low, although the vast majority of those entering the UK illegally do so with the assistance of people smugglers (or facilitators). Figures for the prosecutions of facilitators do not differentiate between asylum seekers who enter illegally, and other illegal entrants. There is no clear statistical trend in the number of facilitators prosecuted at the major ports of Dover and Heathrow.

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applications the UK received from citizens of Sri Lanka in *(a)* 2000, *(b)* 2001, *(c)* 2002 and *(d)* 2003. [148420]

Beverley Hughes: There were 6,395, 5,510 and 3,130 asylum applications (principal applicants) from nationals of Sri Lanka in 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively and 630 asylum applications (principal applicants) from January to September 2003.

Information on asylum applications is published quarterly. The next publication, including provisional data for October to December 2003 and totals for 2003, will be available on the 24 February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate website at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applications have been received from citizens of Sri Lanka since it was included in the list of designated countries on 17 July 2003; how many of these applications *(a)* have been accepted, *(b)* have been refused, *(c)* are still

pending, *(d)* have led to non-suspensive appeals, *(e)* have resulted in successful non-suspensive appeals and *(f)* have resulted in judicial review. [148421]

Beverley Hughes: Asylum applications are published for annual, quarterly, and monthly periods. The following table shows the number of asylum applications (principal applicants) from nationals of Sri Lanka from January to September 2003, the latest date for which figures are available.

Asylum applications[1] received in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, 2003 by month, nationals of Sri Lanka

	Applications
January	120
February	80
March	100
April	70
May	95
June	75
July	30
August	30
September	30
Total to date	630

[1] Provisional figures rounded to nearest five

Information on how many of these applications have been accepted, refused, are still pending, have led to non-suspensive appeals or have resulted in judicial review could be obtained only by examination of individual case records at disproportionate cost.

The following table provides information on the outcomes of initial decisions relating to Sri Lankan nationals, from January to September 2003, the latest date for which figures are available. Initial decisions made in any given month may relate to applications made in previous months.

Initial decisions on asylum applications[1,2] received in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, nationals of Sri Lanka, 2003 by month

	Decisions					
	Total decisions	Grants of asylum	Grants of exceptional leave to remain	Grants of humanitarian protection	Grants of discretionary leave	Total refusals[3,4]
January	155	5	20	n/a	n/a	130
February	180	*	20	n/a	n/a	160
March	250	5	20	n/a	n/a	225
April	185	*	n/a	—	10	175
May	140	—	n/a	—	5	135
June	155	5	n/a	—	10	140
July	100	*	n/a	—	5	95
August	60	*	n/a	—	5	55
September	45	5	n/a	—	5	40
Total to date	1,265	20	55	—	35	1,155

[1] Provisional figures rounded to nearest five, with '*' = 1 or 2.
[2] Information is of initial determination decisions, excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions.
[3] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.
[4] May include some refusals under non compliance grounds,
n/a = not applicable

The following table provides information on the outcomes ofappeals at the IAA relating to Sri Lankan nationals, in January to September 2003, the latest date for which figures are available. Not all refusals result in appeals and appeal determinations made in any given month may relate to initial decisions made in previous months.

Outcome of Appeals[1,2] determined by adjudicators of the Immigration Appellate Authority, excluding dependants, nationals of Sri Lanka, 2003, by month

Number of principal appellants

	Appeals determined by adjudicators[2]						
		Allowed		Dismissed		Withdrawn	
	Total	Total	As percentage of Determined	Total	As percentage of Determined	Total	As percentage of Determined
January	625	55	9	560	89	10	2
February	535	45	8	475	89	15	3
March	600	65	11	525	87	10	2
April	545	80	14	455	83	15	3
May	505	85	17	405	80	20	4
June	480	75	16	395	82	10	2
July	505	70	14	420	83	15	3
August	490	50	10	435	88	10	2
September	410	55	14	350	85	5	1
Total to date	4,710	580	12	4,015	85	110	2

[1] Provisional figures rounded to nearest five (except percentages), with '*' = 1 or 2. Figures may not add up due to independent rounding.
[2] Figures include cases withdrawn by the Home Office, as well as the appellant.

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applicants who are citizens of Sri Lanka were given permission to stay in the UK in *(a)* 2000, *(b)* 2001, *(c)* 2002 and *(d)* 2003; and how many applications were refused in each of these years. [148422]

Beverley Hughes: The following table shows the available data, for outcomes of initial decisions relating to asylum applications (principal applicants) for nationals of Sri Lanka in 2000, 2001, 2002 and from January to September 2003. Grants of exceptional leave to remain and of discretionary leave may be followed by review of individuals' cases and do not necessarily result in permanent settlement.

Initial decisions on asylum applications[1,2] received in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by year—nationals of Sri Lanka—principal applicants

Decisions	*2000*	*2001*[3]	*2002*[4]	*2003*[4,5]
Total decisions	9,050	10,350	4,285	1,265
Grants of asylum	900	1,440	340	20
Grants of exceptional leave to remain	285	540	275	55
Grants of humanitarian protection	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
Grants of discretionary leave	[6]	[6]	[6]	35
Total refusals[7]	6,875	8,370	3,670	1,155
Grants of exceptional leave to remain under backlog criteria[8,9]	895	[6]	[6]	[6]
Non compliance refusals under backlog criteria[8,10]	100	[6]	[6]	[6]

[1] Provisional figures rounded to nearest 5.
[2] Information is of initial determination decisions, excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions.
[3] Revised figures
[4] Provisional figures
[5] January to September
[6] Not applicable
[7] May include some refusals under non compliance grounds.
[8] Cases decided under pragmatic measures aimed at reducing the pre 1996 asylum backlog.
[9] May include a small number of cases where asylum has been granted.
[10] May include a small number of cases where the application has been refused on substantive grounds.

The following table shows the available data, for outcomes of appeals relating to refused asylum applications (principal applicants) for nationals of Sri Lanka in 2000, 2001, 2002 and from January to September 2003. Allowed appeals may result in grants of asylum, grants of humanitarian protection or grants of discretionary leave, or in appeals to the IAT by the Secretary of State, and do not necessarily result in permanent settlement.

Outcome of appeals[1,2] determined by adjudicators of the Immigration Appellate Authority, excluding dependants—nationals of Sri Lanka—2001 to September 2003

Number of principal appellants

	2001	*2002*	*Total to September 2003*
Appeals determined by adjudicators			
Total	290	525	4,710
Allowed			
Total	105	145	580
As percentage of determined	36	28	12
Dismissed			
Total	180	370	4,015
As percentage of determined	62	70	85
Withdrawn			
Total	5	10	110
As percentage of determined	2	2	2

[1] Provisional figures rounded to nearest 5 (except percentages). Figures may not add up due to independent rounding.
[2] Figures include cases withdrawn by the Home Office, as well as the appellant.

Information on asylum applications and decisions is published quarterly. The next publication will be available on 24 February 2004 on the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate web site at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html.

Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were held in prisons in England and Wales owing to no final decision having been reached on their right to remain in the United Kingdom as political or religious asylum seekers on 1 January 2003. [148608]

Beverley Hughes: Detention under the Immigration Acts may normally be appropriate while a person's identity and basis of claim is established, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that a person will fail to comply with the terms of temporary admission or release, or to effect removal. In addition, individuals whose asylum claims appear to be capable of being decided quickly may be detained as part of a fast-track asylum process. The majority of those detained for these reasons are held in Immigration Service removal centres. In a small number of individual cases it is necessary for reasons of security and control to hold detained persons in prison accommodation. The immigration or asylum cases of such individuals may be at various stages. Information on case status is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual case records.

As at 27 September 2003 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 100 persons detained in prisons in England and Wales solely under the Immigration Act, who had claimed asylum at some stage.

Information on the number of asylum applicants detained solely under the Immigration Act is published quarterly on the Home Office website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html. Data for those detained at the end of December 2003 will be published on 24 February.

Civic Renewal

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to encourage people to take part in community action for the purposes of civic renewal. [147239]

Fiona Mactaggart *[holding answer 12 January 2004]*: The Home Office recognises that local communities are best placed to define and solve their own problems and that they should be able to work with the relevant authorities and organisations in a flexible way. This approach is termed civil renewal and can be applied across areas such as policing, criminal justice, and the work of drug action teams.

In terms of policing and police reform, for example, in the last six months three police authority areas have been identified—Cheshire, Merseyside and Northumbria—to test out new ways to engage with communities. The lessons they learn will be fed through to the work of a Practitioner Panel which will identify and share good practice in citizen-focused policy and community engagement.

Reform of the criminal justice system will continue to address the challenge of developing more effective community engagement, so that individuals and communities affected by crime can play an active part in solving the crime-related problems in their local areas, and can feel greater confidence in the criminal justice system.

As another example of the civil renewal approach, the Home Office is monitoring what drug action teams across the country do to engage local communities. Progress is good, including a grants scheme for black and minority ethnic community groups to carry out research into the health needs of their communities and generate ideas for service improvements.

The Home Office is currently consulting the community and voluntary sector about practical ways to build capacity in communities in order to achieve civil renewal. It has also recently launched the Active Citizenship Centre, which is the centre for research in best practice and case studies of civil renewal.

Correspondence

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham of 10 July 2003. [144158]

Caroline Flint *[holding answer 16 December 2003]*: The Home Office can find no trace of the original correspondence. After being provided with a copy, I replied to the hon. Member on 18 December 2003.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his normal practice is for the length of time taken to reply to correspondence. [145620]

Caroline Flint: The Home Office's published targets for responding to correspondence are as follows:

	Length of time taken to reply to correspondence
Correspondence from Member of Parliament relating to matters other than immigration, nationality and HM Prison Service	[1]15
Correspondence from Members of Parliament relating to immigration, nationality and HM Prison Service	[1]20
Correspondence, including emails, from members of the public	[1]20

[1]Working days

A great deal of effort has been put into improving performance over the past six months following the introduction of the new Correspondence Tracking System.

The latest available figures show that 60 per cent. of letters from hon. Members are now replied to within the target. This is an increase on the figure of 36 per cent. achieved in May 2003. Although this indicates a considerable improvement, the department is committed to improving this further.

Cyber-terrorism

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his assessment of the current risk to British security posed by cyber-terrorism. [148761]

Mr. Blunkett *[holding answer 19 January 2004]*: The National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre (NISCC) is continually monitoring the threat of electronic attack on the UK's Critical National Infrastructure. NISCC's assessment is that the overall threat from electronic attack is increasing but remains less attractive than a conventional attack. While the threat of the sort of attack that could disable a critical service is considered to remain low, less serious but damaging attacks that might deface a website or deny service from a website are assessed to be more likely.

Uninsured Drivers

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in each police force area were charged by police with driving without insurance in each of the last five years. [148742]

Ms Blears: Information on the number of people charged is not collected centrally.

However, the number of prosecutions for the offence of using a motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks is given in the table from 1997 to 2001 by police force area.

Information for 2002 will be available in the spring.

Total proceedings at the magistrates courts for the offence of using a motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks[1] total offences by persons[2] England and Wales

	Number of offences				
Police force area	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*
Avon and Somerset	15,354	16,891	15,094	14,609	13,022
Bedfordshire	4,724	4,449	3,477	3,594	4,651
Cambridgeshire	3,438	3,422	3,056	2,926	2,507
Cheshire	4,836	4,958	5,458	5,725	4,973
Cleveland	3,925	4,203	4,330	4,793	4,789
Cumbria	4,215	3,783	3,596	3,507	3,594
Derbyshire	5,563	5,135	5,118	5,314	5,428
Devon and Cornwall	8,422	7,231	7,493	9,233	8,648
Dorset	5,271	4,198	4,776	6,035	5,262
Durham	3,989	4,260	5,898	5,470	5,394
Essex	7,151	7,020	7,333	7,893	7,705
Gloucestershire	3,574	4,463	4,442	4,173	4,681
Greater Manchester	30,636	30,829	33,203	33,762	37,068
Hampshire	11,764	11,552	11,545	10,557	10,347
Hertfordshire	4,575	5,795	4,744	5,254	5,815
Humberside	4,402	4,278	4,892	5,021	4,729
Kent	6,931	6,955	6,150	9,032	9,588
Lancashire	20,326	18,787	18,097	18,348	16,268
Leicestershire	9,696	9,476	11,053	10,260	10,467
Lincolnshire	4,589	4,999	5,345	4,500	4,083
London, City of	2,669	3,127	2,517	1,738	1,824
Merseyside	10,896	9,741	8,932	10,054	9,466
Metropolitan Police	42,266	35,057	31,269	29,635	32,015
Norfolk	3,928	3,433	3,467	3,951	4,744
Northamptonshire	4,997	4,842	5,560	3,946	2,027
Northumbria	12,469	11,837	13,296	13,192	12,503
North Yorkshire	3,925	3,742	4,001	3,903	3,541
Nottinghamshire	8,078	8,725	7,955	7,748	7,856
South Yorkshire	11,223	11,551	11,759	12,689	14,615
Staffordshire	8,175	8,206	8,018	8,777	6,023
Suffolk	3,254	3,743	4,188	3,918	4,119
Surrey	4,940	3,908	4,436	4,939	5,100
Sussex	9,333	8,201	7,413	6,796	6,814
Thames Valley	11,884	11,945	13,540	12,811	11,723
Warwickshire	4,315	3,761	3,522	4,133	4,204
West Mercia	7,075	8,207	7,446	7,686	7,784
West Midlands	29,862	30,916	27,400	28,140	27,000
West Yorkshire	23,978	23,546	25,769	26,527	27,616
Wiltshire	3,459	4,818	4,706	4,901	5,292
Dyfed-Powys	3,079	2,852	3,017	3,071	2,952
Gwent	4,094	4,476	4,451	4,679	4,757
North Wales	4,859	4,452	4,101	3,696	3,370
South Wales	14,828	16,186	15,403	14,615	13,803
England and Wales	396,967	389,956	387,266	391,551	388,167

[1] An offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988 s143(2).

[2] Excludes companies, local authorities etc. One person may be proceeded against more than once on the same occasion.

Euro

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many speeches during 2003 he declared support for the Government's policy on the euro. [147298]

Caroline Flint: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Give as You Earn Scheme

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of staff in his Department contribute to a charity through the Give as You Earn scheme; how much money is donated to charity per month by staff in his Department through the scheme; and what steps he is taking to encourage greater participation in the scheme by staff in his Department. [143906]

Fiona Mactaggart: Figures for staff in central Home Office and Immigration and Nationality Directorate contributing to the Give as You Earn (GAYE) scheme are outlined in the table. Figures are taken from the November 2003 payroll. Figures for other agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) are currently not available.

Give as You Earn scheme

Number of payees contributing	770 out of 20,162
Percentage of payees contributing	3.82
Monthly amount collected	£8,877.48

Home Office staff can find information on how to contribute to the GAYE scheme from their personnel unit; or electronically, via our Intranet. Promotion of the scheme has recently taken place in some small areas in London. The Human Resources Policy Section is currently working on a strategy to publicise the scheme across the whole Department. This work has been suspended because of the current pay dispute, but I would envisage that the strategy will be implemented in the spring.

Illegal Entrants (Amnesties)

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amnesties in the form of permission to stay have been offered to people who entered the country illegally during the last 15 years; and when. [148148]

Beverley Hughes: There have been no "amnesties" targeted at people who entered illegally in the last 15 years.

On three occasions during that time special exercises have been undertaken to grant leave to people meeting specified criteria. The administrative exercise in 1992–93 granted exceptional leave to remain to 60 per cent. of those refused asylum—possibly over 20,000. There was no announcement to Parliament.

The exercise in 1998, announced to Parliament in 1998, granted leave to those whose claims had been subject to delay in processing.

The focused exercise we announced last October is targeted at families who applied before reforms were made to the appeal system and who have children who are established within our communities.

Immigration Surcharge

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason he is planning to levy a surcharge on those coming to the UK *(a)* for higher education and *(b)* to take up employment; what windfall gain this charge is intended to engender; and what his Department means by the term over-cost. [148161]

Beverley Hughes: The Asylum and Immigration Bill includes an enabling power to introduce an over-cost charge for non-asylum applications where there are existing powers to charge. We believe it is fair that people who want to come to the UK to study or take up employment should make a contribution in return for the benefits they receive. Final decisions about the level of any additional fees for different categories of applicant,

and regarding the timing of their introduction, will be taken only after wide consultation with key stakeholders and other Government Departments.

The term over-cost refers to setting a fee at a rate that exceeds the administrative cost of determining or processing such an application.

Imprisonable Offences

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many imprisonable offences have been created since 1997. [147354]

Paul Goggins: The Home Office is responsible for aspects of the criminal law, but records of all imprisonable offences enacted in any parliamentary session are not kept centrally. The following information therefore relates only to Home Office measures. 257 imprisonable offences have been created, modified or re-enacted since 1 May 1997.

Islam

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will encourage leaders of the Islamic faith in the United Kingdom to support the reform of Islamic law which calls for the death penalty for apostates. [147425]

Beverley Hughes: While the Government does not generally intervene in matters of religious doctrine, I am aware that Islamic teaching places a strong injunction on Muslims to abide by the laws of the society in which they live and that the great majority of Muslims in the United Kingdom are peaceful and law-abiding members of society. The United Kingdom is fortunate in having a number of wise and responsible Muslim religious and community leaders who advocate a peaceful and constructive way of life. The Government has a continuing dialogue with these leaders, as with leaders of other faiths, and shares their aim of resisting and isolating all forms of extremism.

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures the Government is taking to protect members of the Islamic faith who convert to Christianity. [147426]

Beverley Hughes: There is already substantial legislation to protect people who are victimised or discriminated against because of their religion. For example, the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 already contains provisions which make it a criminal offence to incite or arouse fear of racial or religious hatred. The Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 created new religiously aggravated offences in England and Wales, under which crimes such as assault and criminal damage attract a higher maximum penalty if they are committed because of the victim's religious belief or lack of belief. We would urge any person whose safety or property is threatened because of their religious beliefs or lack of beliefs to report the matter to the police. The Home Office has recently published a response to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences, in which we have indicated our support in principle for a new offence of incitement to religious hatred in England and Wales.

Passports

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a British passport with biometric data and bar coding will be available; and at what cost. [147553]

Beverley Hughes: The United Kingdom Passport Service and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are working on a joint programme to issue electronically enabled passports capable of supporting the applications of facial recognition software. The programme plans to start issuing this new form of passport in mid 2005 with a phased roll out through the remainder of that year. This will be a major technological change and it is important to introduce the new form of passports in a safe and controlled way. The possibility of a pilot using diplomatic passports is also being considered.

All British passports are now issued with a machine readable zone (MRZ) in compliance with ICAO standards; some media reports have described this as a bar code.

The cost of the new passport will depend on the method of embedding the contactless computer chip into the passport book. Four prototype methods have been developed and are subject to durability tests. Information on likely costs will be developed during the pilots.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how an applicant for a new British passport will be able to provide biometric information for the passport; and how system security will be guaranteed. [147554]

Beverley Hughes: The new British passport will support facial recognition and the biometric data will be provided by applicants in the form of a photograph. These photographs will need to comply with format standards and new guidance notes are being prepared.

The current security accreditation of passport issuing systems will be maintained and the electronic information stored in the document will be secured by a digital signature at the time of issue.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the forms of biometric and bar code data that will be encompassed within the new British passport. [147596]

Beverley Hughes: The new British passport, which it is planned will be issued from mid 2005 onwards, will store electronically a portrait or image of the applicant of sufficient resolution to support the application of any form of facial recognition software. In addition, some of the information printed on the biodata page of the passport will also be stored electronically.

This information will be stored on contactless computer chip and will be digitally signed when issued to prevent alteration and confirm authentication.

All British passports already contain a machine readable zone (MRZ) which contains some of the same biodata; some media reports have described this as a bar code.

Prisons

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to introduce an exit centre in HM Prison Leeds for people leaving prison, to link addiction, mental health, rehabilitation, education and training procedures inside prison with programmes available outside. [149034]

Paul Goggins: Funding has been secured for the development of a healthy living centre that will draw upon partnerships with the community to provide better opportunities for prisoners to make informed decisions about lifestyle and healthy living. Community partnerships have also been established to build upon housing and employment provision and to improve the opportunity and quality of education. I would be happy to meet my right hon. Friend to discuss how these projects can help achieve the objectives he outlines.

Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were (i) serving a life sentence for murder and (ii) category A prisoners on 1 January. [148606]

Paul Goggins: At the end of November 2003, 3,546 males and 133 females were serving a life sentence for murder in prisons in England and Wales.

At the end of November 2003, 951 males and seven females who were in prisons in England and Wales were classified as Category A prisoners.

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change in the percentage of remand prisoners who are women convicted and awaiting sentence. [142889]

Paul Goggins: The number and percentage of remand prisoners who are women convicted and awaiting sentence is given in the following table.

Female remand population in custody

	1992	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Females on remand	383	395	490	491	538	599	704	748	700	775	945
Untried	271	285	351	344	371	396	426	434	396	430	496
Convicted unsentenced	112	110	139	147	167	203	278	313	304	345	449
Convicted unsentenced [1]	29	28	28	30	31	34	39	42	43	45	47

[1] As a percentage of total female population.

Note:
The components do not always add to the totals because they have been rounded independently.

The number of female convicted unsentenced prisoners as a percentage of the total female remand population has increased since 1992; showing a similar increase to the number of male convicted unsentenced prisoners as a percentage of the total male remand population. There are many reasons for this increase. For example, arrangements for plea before venue, as made possible by the Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 and the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997, were implemented on 1 October 1997. Plea before venue led to offenders pleading guilty earlier than previously and hence spending less time untried and spending proportionately more time convicted unsentenced.

Sentencing

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that *(a)* magistrates and *(b)* judges have sufficient information to make the most effective use of prison and probation services. [147367]

Paul Goggins: Pre-sentence reports prepared by the probation service provide information to the sentencing court about the offender and the offence(s) committed to assist the court to decide on a suitable sentence. The report analyses the offence; includes an offender assessment covering accommodation and employment, details of any substance misuse, mental illness, etc.; looks at patterns of offending and the outcome of any earlier court interventions. Each report contains a conclusion as to whether or not the offender is suitable for a community sentence and should make a clear and realistic proposal for sentence designed to protect the public and reduce re-offending, including for custody where that is necessary.

The Sentencing Guidelines Council will introduce a robust and comprehensive set of sentencing guidelines to assist the courts in their task of ensuring consistent and just disposals in all cases.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Russell Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of staff employed within his Department are over 55 years of age; and what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of staff recruited over the last 12 months are over 55 years of age. [145930]

Fiona Mactaggart: The following table provides the percentage of staff over 55 in the Department, the numbers of staff recruited in the last 12 months who are over age 55 and what percentage of the overall recruitment is over age 55 in the last 12 months.

	Percentage staff over age 55	*Number of staff over 55 recruited in the last 12 months*	*Percentage of staff over age 55 recruited in the last 12 months*
Non-Agency Home Office	8.80	149	3.40
Prison Service	14.00	372	6
Forensic Science Service	6.23	8	.3
UK Passport Service	10.40	372	5.40

Terrorism

Ross Cranston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department further to his answer of 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 669W, with which offences under the Terrorism Act 2001 the 94 individuals have been charged. [148923]

Mr. Blunkett: The Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis informs me that this information is not currently held centrally and is being collated. I will write to my hon. and learned Friend when I have the information and place a copy in the Library of the House.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the proposed register of violent partners will be administered; and if he will make a statement. [147325]

Paul Goggins: We propose to create a register of domestic violence civil orders. This will give the police the information they need to be able to enforce orders properly and protect victims. It can be established through a non-legislative route, for example by using the Police National Computer.

In terms of offenders, those who have been convicted of specific violent and sexual offences and have been given a custodial sentence of 12 months or more are already registered on the Violent and Sex Offenders' Register (ViSOR). ViSOR gives the police a way of risk-assessing and managing dangerous offenders, and covers the majority of domestic violence offenders who will be convicted of offences such as Actual Bodily Harm and Wounding with Intent.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fuel Poverty (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many fuel poor households there are in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* each district in Lancashire; [146968]

(2) how many *(a)* children and *(b)* elderly people are living in fuel poor households in each Lancashire district. [146969]

Nigel Griffiths: Fuel poverty is defined as a household having to spend more than 10 per cent. of its income on all energy use in order to maintain satisfactory heat in the home. The current published official estimates of fuel poverty are extrapolated from a sample survey of 17,500 dwellings carried out in 2001.

Figures are not available at county level.

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money her Department has allocated to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux *(a)* in each of the last three years and *(b)* for each of the next three years; and if she will make a statement. [148529]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Department of Trade and Industry has allocated the following grant in aid payments to Citizens Advice (formerly the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—NACAB) during the past three financial years:

	£ million
2003–04	21.24
2002–03	17.15
2001–02	16.8

My officials are currently discussing future budgetary requirements and allocations with Citizens Advice and a final decision on allocations has not yet been made.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the head of the Insolvency Service last met the liquidators of BCCI. [149583]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Chief Executive of the Insolvency Service met one of the liquidators of BCCI on 4 March 2003.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations she has received from hon. Members about the liquidation of BCCI. [149585]

Mr. Sutcliffe: In view of the period over which the liquidation of BCCI has continued, this question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she expects to receive the annual report of the liquidators of BCCI. [149586]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The next annual report on the liquidation of BCCI will cover the period 16 January 2003 to 15 January 2004.

I would expect it to be submitted as soon as the accounting and other information can be compiled.

Business Regulations

Mr. Michael Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to restrict the implementation of new business regulations to two specific dates each year, 1 April and 1 September; and if she will make a statement. [148601]

Mr. Sutcliffe: From 2004 the DTI is commencing domestic employment regulations on two dates each year. This will ensure that changes to employment policy are made in a more coordinated fashion and will provide businesses, employee representatives and individuals with grater clarity and awareness about when changes will be made.

The common commencement dates are 6 April, the start of the tax year, and 1 October, the date when the minimum wage is revised. I refer the hon. Member to the written statement I made in the House of Commons on 14 January 2004, *Official Report*, columns 35–40WS, listing all the employment regulations and their commencement dates on which the DTI leads and which

are expected to commence in 2004. This statement, which will now be published annually, is also available on the Internet at www.dti.gov.uk/er/regs2004.htm

The Action Plan "A Government Action Plan for Small Business" published by the Small Business Service on 8 January 2004 (available on the Internet at www.sbs.gov.uk) includes the proposal for the Government to consider introducing common commencement dates to other areas of domestic legislation.

Consumer Codes of Practice

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the Office of Fair Trading intends to encourage new code sponsors to apply for OFT approval. [148901]

Mr. Sutcliffe: This is a matter for the Chairman of the OFT and I have asked him to write to my hon. Friend directly.

Consumer Credit

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on her Department's work with the Office of Fair Trading on consumer credit law reform. [148899]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Department published its proposals for reform of the consumer credit regime in the recent Consumer Credit White Paper; "Fair, Clear and Competitive—The Consumer Credit Market in the 21st Century".

The White Paper is the culmination of a major review of consumer credit law that was launched in July 2001. Our proposals have been drawn up through close consultation with all of the key stakeholders representing industry, consumer groups and enforcement agencies—including the Office of Fair Trading. We are continuing to work closely with the Office of Fair Trading on developing the detailed legislation and guidance needed to implement our proposals.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the Office of Fair Trading intends to improve the fitness checking of consumer credit licence applicants through access to criminal records. [148900]

Mr. Sutcliffe: New procedures for checking criminal records are due to be introduced by the OFT this year. The OFT is currently finalising arrangements for the introduction of these new measures which will be announced in Spring 2004.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment she has made of the feasibility of capping annual percentage rates on credit cards but not on short-term loans; [149503]

(2) when she expects the research which her Department have commissioned into the way interest ceilings work in other EU countries will be completed. [149504]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Government are not persuaded of the benefits of introducing interest rate ceilings for credit products of any type. A rate ceiling could actually encourage rates to gravitate towards the ceiling, causing detriment to consumers and competition. It might also encourage lenders to make the cost of credit more expensive to consumers in other ways (for example by introducing higher charges), or lead some lenders to exit the market, denying some consumers access to credit.

However, the Government have commissioned research into the way these interest ceilings operate in other countries. It is anticipated the research will be published in the spring of this year.

EU Tarrifs/Quotas

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what quantitative assessment she has made of the likely financial benefit to the least developed countries of the admission by Europe of non-armament imports free of tariffs and quotas. [149133]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: None. The loss of income for the EU budget arising from the special arrangements for Least Developed Countries of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (known as Everything-but-Arms, EBA) has been costed by the European Commission at €239 million in 2001, the first year of the scheme. The loss of income for the previous year, before the special arrangements came into effect, was €190 million.

European Directives

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to her answer of 7 January, *Official Report*, column 380W, on Posting of Workers Directive, what research she has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the wages and conditions enjoyed by migrant workers in the UK under the Posting of Workers Directive compared to permanent British workers. [148036]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Government undertakes regular surveys into the wages and conditions of workers in the UK, although it does not explicitly make a distinction between migrant and non-migrant workers. In December 2002 a joint Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions report, "Migrants in the UK: their characteristics and labour market outcomes and impacts" found that migrants (defined as the foreign born) earn approximately 19 per cent. more than non-migrants.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research she has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on breaches of the Working Time Directive in the UK, with particular reference to (i) compulsory signing of opt-outs, (ii) pressure on staff to sign opt-outs, (iii) workplaces where the law is ignored, (iv) staff illegally asked to opt out of their rights to rest breaks and night work limits and (v) sending new staff opt-in and opt-out forms; and if she will make a statement. [148052]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The department has commissioned a range of research looking at the Working Time Directive in the UK. The evidence suggests that the

majority of UK workers are in workplaces complying with the Working Time Regulations. However, there are some areas of concern.

A Survey of Workers' Experiences of the Working Time Regulations commissioned by the department in 2001 shows that just under a quarter of 'long hours' workers who have not signed an opt-out perceived employer pressure to work long hours. A second piece of research published by DTI in 2003, the Business Context to Long Hours Working, suggests that in establishments which had sustained long hours working, around three-quarters had no employees sign the opt-out.

The research commissioned does not specifically look at whether staff have been illegally asked to optout of their rights to rest breaks and night work limits. However, the Survey of Workers' Experiences of the Working Time Regulations found that approximately one in 10 workers 'without full rest breaks' thought they had experienced employer pressure to work without full rest breaks, and a similar proportion of 'night workers' felt pressured to work long hours at night.

Other research published by DTI in 2003 looking at the Implementation of the Working Time Regulations: a follow up study, reported that one case study employer, an engineering company, had made the signing of an opt-out agreement a condition of employment for new starters who worked nights.

I am ready to look at suggestions for improving the operation of working time law, including concerns over misuse of the opt-out to make sure it works properly. I recently wrote to the CBI and TUC inviting them to discuss what we may offer to do to meet the concerns identified in the European Commission Communication on working time.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the value to UK *(a)* employers and *(b)* employees of the UK allowing an opt-out to the Working Time Directive. [148053]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The opt-out from the weekly working time limits is valuable as it provides flexibility for employers and the choice for employees to work longer hours if they want to. Without the opt-out, employers would have to reduce the hours of some of their workers. This could cause problems for both employers and employees. A recent study The Business Context to Long Hours Working published by my department in 2003 shows that employers thought the most common barrier to reducing the hours of staff was the needs of the business and workload (55 per cent. of respondents cited this), second to this was the concern that existing staff may resist the reduction in hours as it could limit their choice to work these hours and a reduction in their overtime pay (22 per cent.).

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will place in the Library a copy of the research document commissioned by her Department on The use and necessity of Article 18(b)(1) of the Working Time Directive in the United Kingdom. [149013]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The research document in question was not commissioned by my Department, but by the European Commission. They have not published it, but I understand they can provide copies of it on request.

Home Security Systems

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps she is taking to prevent companies selling alarm systems from gaining access to homes by claiming to be carrying out a security check. [149346]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Government are concerned about the practices adopted by some doorstep traders and have welcomed the Office of Fair Trading's investigation of the doorstep selling market. The investigation report is expected in the next couple of months. Recommendations resulting from the investigation will be considered very carefully.

Insolvency Service

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the administrative costs were of the Insolvency Service in each year since 1997; and if she will break down these costs for 2003–04 by main budget head. [147802]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Expenditure of the Insolvency Service as reported in its Annual Report and Accounts since 1997 was.

£000

Year	*Expenditure*
1997–98	78,538
1998–99	78,159
1999–2000	80,512
2000–01	80,314
2001–02	81,840
2002–03	90,332

Forecast budgeted expenditure for 2003–04 based on Department of Trade and Industry main budget headings are:

£000

Budget	*Forecast*
Pay	48,000
Accommodation	10,400
GAE	10,600
Programme	16,450
Inter Department (non cash)	6,500
Capital	2,925
Non cash accounting adjustments	5,000
Total	99,875

Note:

The Insolvency Service merged with The Redundancy Payments Service on 1 April 2003. Figures for 2003–04 therefore include the budgeted costs of The Redundancy Payments Service whereas those for prior years do not.

Protectionism (Labelling)

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence she has collated on the use of national and regional labelling schemes as a protectionist barrier to trade. [149073]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: There is no central body of information listing national and regional labelling schemes. However, we work closely with the European Commission to secure the removal or amelioration of labelling schemes that are unnecessarily trade restrictive.

Research Funding

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the funding for *(a)* the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils and *(b)* the grant-in-aid funding allocated to the (i) Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, (ii) Economic and Social Research Council, (iii) Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, (iv) Medical Research Council, (v) Natural Environment Research Council and (vi) Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council in 2003–04 as set out in her Departmental Report 2003; and what payments have been made to each council since 1997. [147796]

Ms Hewitt: The 2002 Spending Review resulted in the largest increases in the Science Budget for over a decade, with year-on-year growth of 10 per cent. in real terms from 2003–04. Cash[1] Grant-in-Aid payments to each of the Research Councils for each financial year from April 1997 are set out in the table.

£000

	Allocation	*Actual*					
	2003–04	*2002–03*	*2001–02*	*2000–01*	*1999–2000*	*1998–99*	*1997–98*
CCLRC	[2]83,447	15,607	9,181	4,075	2,000	1,462	1,206
BBSRC	267,649	241,510	213,874	211,991	195,545	185,739	189,022
ESRC	94,584	82,963	73,647	71,800	70,872	67,506	65,227
EPSRC	463,224	473,534	444,023	413,552	404,796	379,444	386,276
MRC	387,993	365,136	356,248	319,651	304,538	284,098	292,721
NERC	286,359	205,677	187,671	178,850	176,715	173,967	166,150
PPARC	259,062	235,540	210,282	205,774	186,680	209,052	197,869

[1] figures shown in the Departmental Report 2003 are on a resource basis and are not directly comparable with those above. Figures are not available on a consistent resource basis for the whole of the period shown.
[2] figures also reflect changes to the structure and responsibilities of CCLRC following its Quinquennial Review, published in April 2002, including responsibility for UK subscriptions to the Institut Laue Langevin and the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility in Grenoble.

Steel Tariffs

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions she has had with the United States on steel tariffs on United Kingdom steel exports. [148217]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: UK ministers held regular discussions with the United States on steel in the run-up to President Bush's decision on 4 December 2003 to remove the US steel safeguard tariffs. No ministerial level discussions have taken place since then.

Strike Action

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many days have been lost to strike action in each month since January 1997. [148194]

Mr. Sutcliffe: Information is available in the following table.

Working days lost due to labour disputes January 1997 to November 2003

Month	*Working days lost (thousand)*
1997	
January	25
February	14
March	36
April	48
May	36
June	13
July	11
August	6
September	1
October	19
November	14
December	12
1998	
January	16
February	19
March	33
April	14
May	7
June	69
July	59
August	24
September	6
October	7
November	18
December	11
1999	
January	9
February	27
March	35
April	4
May	50
June	16
July	8
August	10
September	22
October	19
November	22
December	20
2000	
January	11
February	6
March	18
April	11
May	14

Working days lost due to labour disputes January 1997 to November 2003

Month	*Working days lost (thousand)*
June	7
July	36
August	115
September	93
October	14
November	115
December	59
2001	
January	52
February	36
March	48
April	16
May	93
June	12
July	24
August	16
September	22
October	39
November	62
December	102
2002	
January	94
February	24
March	80
April	19
May	81
June	57
July	521
August	13
September	10
October	42
November	371
December	11
2003	
January	91
February	13
March	14
April	9
May	26
June	33
July	47
August	12
September	24
October	131
November	61

Source:
Office for National Statistics

Supermarkets and Suppliers

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she expects to receive the report from the Office of Fair Trading into the code of practice between suppliers and supermarkets. [R] [147768]

Mr. Sutcliffe: The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is expected to conclude its review of the Code of Practice governing supermarkets' relations with their suppliers shortly. The OFT will then send its results to DTI for formal consideration. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will wait for the results of that review before deciding if any action is necessary.

Trade Policy

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is her policy in trade negotiations to pursue a comprehensive approach across the board for all products and all sectors without a priori exceptions. [149148]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Yes, where appropriate.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is her policy to seek bound reduction of high tariffs, particularly tariff plans, with a view to securing greater tariff harmonisation between countries. [149149]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Yes.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is her policy to seek the binding of unbound tariffs at commercially acceptable levels. [149150]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Yes.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is her policy to seek improved geographical coverage of *(a)* zero-duty sectoral agreements and *(b)* sectoral tariff harmonisation agreements. [149151]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government welcomes and encourages increased participation in such agreements.

United Kingdom Trade

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the volume of United Kingdom trade with each of the full members of the G20 was in each of the last 10 years. [146597]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Information on the value of UK trade in goods, by partner country, is published by HM Customs and Excise in Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom. Each annual publication contains data for the latest two years. Business Monitors MA20 for 1994 and 1996 and OTSA for 1998, 2000 and 2002 contain the complete set of information required. These publications are available in the Library.

Unsolicited Telephone Calls

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what actions she has taken to limit unsolicited telephone calls for the purpose of selling goods and services. [148822]

Mr. Sutcliffe: Individual subscribers are offered protection from unsolicited direct marketing calls under the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003.

The regulations state that direct marketing calls may not be made to individuals who have:

(a) previously notified the caller that they do not want to receive such calls, or

(b) been registered on the Telephone Preference Service for 28 days or longer.

The Telephone Preference Service is an opt-out scheme run on Ofcom's behalf by the Direct Marketing Association.

The Government have also committed to allowing corporate subscribers to register on the Telephone Preference Service from spring 2004.

Working Hours

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of *(a)* total employees, *(b)* female employees and *(c)* male employees in the UK worked an average of more than 48 hours per week in the last year for which figures are available. [148174]

Mr. Sutcliffe: According to the Spring 2003 Labour Force Survey 15 per cent. of employees usually worked over 48 hours per week. 6 per cent. of female employees and 23 per cent. of male employees usually worked over 48 hours per week.

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with the Director General of the World Trade Organisation since 15 December 2003. [149070]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: My right hon. Friend last spoke to Dr. Supachai himself at the CBI Conference on 17 November 2003, but we are in regular contact with his officials in Geneva.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what general tariff reduction formula is supported by her Department. [149077]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To stimulate the expansion of trade and economic growth, the Government wants formulae that, consistent with the Doha Declaration, would substantially increase market access for all goods in all WTO member countries.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will identify technical barriers to trade which harm *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* developing countries. [149078]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A major element of Government policy is the creation of fair and open markets at home and aboard. Using the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the European Community's Technical Barriers Regulation, we therefore work closely with UK industry, the European Commission and others in seeking to ensure that individual technical regulations are not unnecessarily trade restrictive and, in particular, to secure the removal or amelioration of those that harm UK exports.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the EU's stance at the Geneva trade talks on *(a)* industrial market access and *(b)* special and differential treatment. [149135]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The UK fully supports the EU's objective of securing an ambitious and comprehensive agreement on non-agricultural market access delivering benefits to all Members and an overall result of the Doha Development Agenda which reflects the needs of different WTO Members through appropriate Special and Differential Treatment.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is her policy to seek greater use of *(a)* mediation and *(b)* resolution of trade disputes prior to formal recourse to the World Trade Organisation dispute settlement understanding procedures. [149145]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government sees the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU), with a binding mechanism for resolving disputes, as one of the key pillars of the WTO and one of the great achievements of the Uruguay Round. We obviously welcome it when parties resolve a dispute without formal recourse to the DSU. We support the Communication issued by the Director-General of the WTO to the WTO membership in 2001 outlining his views on how to make better use of his power to use Good Offices, Conciliation and Mediation. We welcome in particular the use of mediation to resolve a potential dispute between the EU on the one hand and Thailand and the Philippines on the other regarding imports of canned tuna.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she had with Commissioners Lamy and Fischer before the World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in Cancun about the advisability of introducing new issues for which the developing countries would be unprepared to the conference agenda. [149130]

Hilary Benn: I have been asked to reply. Ministers at the fourth WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha agreed that negotiations on the four Singapore (i.e. New) Issues would take place after the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference at Cancun. However this was subject to the condition of a decision being taken, by explicit consensus, on the framework of these negotiations. Such a consensus was not reached by Ministers at the Cancun conference and so negotiations have not started on the Singapore Issues.

Although I did not have any discussions directly with Commissioners Lamy or Fischler about this, since the Cancun ministerial predated my appointment as Secretary of State for International Development, UK Ministers repeatedly made clear that the New Issues were not development priorities. Therefore I welcome the fact that EU Trade Ministers agreed on 2 December that the European Community should "unbundle" the four issues and explore alternative, more flexible approaches, including the possibility of removing some, or all, of the New Issues from the Doha Round.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Civil Service (Disabled People)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set out the number of employees in his Department who have a disability, broken down by disability type. [148983]

Mr. Pearson: Of the 32,384, staff employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Office, 1,277 (3.9 per cent.) declared a disability. The breakdown by disability type is:

Type of disability	*Number*
Hearing impairment	189
Visual impairment	57
Speech impairment	43
Mobility impairment	157
Physical co-ordination difficulties	39
Reduced physical capacity	326
Severe disfigurement	17
Learning difficulties	20
Mental illness	96
More than one disability	326
Type of disability not specified	7
Total	1,277

Demography

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his estimate is of the size of each minority group, including Travellers, in Northern Ireland. [149226]

Mr. Pearson: The table gives details of the 2001 Census question relating to ethnic group, including Irish Travellers.

2001 Census population count of ethnic group, including Irish Travellers

Ethnic group	*Count*	*Population percentage*
White	1,670,988	99.15
Irish Traveller	1,710	0.10
Mixed	3,319	0.20
Indian	1,567	0.09
Pakistani	666	0.04
Bangladeshi	252	0.01
Other Asian	194	0.01
Black Caribbean	255	0.02
Black African	494	0.03
Other Black	387	0.02
Chinese	4,145	0.25
Other ethnic group	1,290	0.08
Total	1,685,267	100.00

Development Plan, Killyleath

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a decision will be made in relation to the proposed development plan for Gocean, Killyleagh; and if he will make a statement. [148815]

Angela Smith: I expect to make a decision on the proposal for Gocean, Killyleagh within the next month.

Healthy Eating

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to promote healthy eating in schools in Northern Ireland. [148764]

Mr. Pearson: The following criteria will be applied:

1. Vision for future agri-food provision;
2. Stakeholder consultation—initial and on-going;
3. Selection/targeting of proposed courses and research;
4. Capital and other set-up costs; and
5. Promotion and marketing of relevant courses.

A decision is expected in early April 2004.

Heart Defibrillators

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the need for the provision of heart defibrillators in *(a)* leisure facilities, *(b)* entertainment complexes, *(c)* shopping centres, *(d)* other public places used by large numbers of individuals and *(e)* public places where large numbers of individuals are likely to congregate. [148826]

Angela Smith: The effectiveness of public access to defibrillators is currently being assessed through a research project commissioned by the Research and Development Office, on behalf of DHSSPS, entitled "A study of the Effectiveness and Cost-effectiveness of Public Access Defibrillation in Urban and Rural Populations in Northern Ireland".

This three-year project forms part of a programme of commissioned research to inform policy development for the "Investing for Health" strategy.

International Tendering Fund

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland firms have been assisted by the International Tendering Fund; and what the effect has been on winning overseas contracts. [149211]

Mr. Pearson: Since the inception of Invest NI on 1 April 2002 the International Tendering Fund has assisted 15 companies. Although no tenders have been won to date, many of these projects are still ongoing. The process can take up to three years for an international tender contract to be awarded, and Invest NI continue to track the progress of all fund participants.

Planning Applications

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what he recommends as a reasonable period of time before an applicant can expect to be informed whether his or her planning application is successful. [148814]

Angela Smith: Planning Service is committed to processing all valid planning applications as expeditiously as possible. This is reflected in the Agency's Corporate and Business Plans 2003–04 to 2005–06. But there will be cases which, due to their complexity and scale, take longer.

Racist Incidents (Health Workers)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his estimate is of the number of racist incidents involving *(a)* nurses, *(b)* other hospital staff and *(c)* workers in health and social services in the past 12 months; and what measures are being taken by hospital management and health authorities to address this issue. [149241]

Angela Smith: Information on incidents involving violence against staff employed in the HPSS is not currently held in the form which would identify attacks of a racist nature. Reports from HPSS employers indicate that the number of incidents which are perceived as racist in origin is negligible.

The Department has issued guidance on racial harassment and violence against staff employed in the HPSS. The Department, in consultation with employing authorities, is also developing a mandatory recording and reporting system for incidents involving physical or verbal violence.

The Department has also been involved with the Police Service of Northern Ireland in developing a joint protocol for police and HPSS employees for the reporting of incidents of verbal and physical abuse.

Regional Cancer Centre

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress on the Northern Ireland regional CAncer Centre, with particular reference to staffing. [148846]

Angela Smith: The Cancer Centre construction programme is on schedule for completion by December 2005 with the opening planned for early 2006. So far, significant developments have included the opening of the new Oncology and Haematology Day Hospital on 12 May 2003 and the transfer of Oncology Day Services from Belvoir Park Hospital in June last year.

The Department's Priorities for Action require Boards and trusts to agree a service development plan for the Cancer Centre, including staffing, drugs and equipment, by 31 March 2004. Significant resources have been received to assist with the staffing of the Cancer Centre, with further allocations of funds expected in 2004–05 and 2005–06.

Road Gritting

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what the cost was of gritting roads during the winter of each year since 2000–01; [148947]

(2) how and by whom decisions are taken regarding when roads in Northern Ireland are gritted; and what flexibility there is in terms of the number treated on any particular occasion. [148951]

Mr. Spellar: I have asked the Chief Executive of Roads Service to write to the hon. Lady in response to these questions. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Sheep

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to improve the identification of sheep in Northern Ireland. [148767]

Mr. Pearson: Following on from decisions reached at the EU Farm Council on 17 December 2003, my officials will shortly be consulting the industry on proposals to improve the system for the identification and registration of sheep and goats.

Waterways (Pollution)

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many convictions there have been for pollution of waterways in Northern Ireland in the last 12 months. [148832]

Angela Smith: During the last 12 months, 82 convictions were secured for water pollution offences.

Further information on enforcement and prosecution is available on the Environment and Heritage Service website at: http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/pubs/publications/Water_Pollution_Incidents 2001.pdf

The Water Pollution Incident and Prosecution Statistics Report for 2002 will be available shortly and will be placed in the Library.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Departmental Advertising

Brian Cotter: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each agency and non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department has spent on (i) advertising and (ii) information campaigns in each year from 1995–96 to 2003–04 (estimated); and if he will make a statement. [149621]

Hilary Benn: Our expenditure on publicity, which forms a part of our effort to raise development awareness and understanding of international development issues in the UK, has been as follows:

	£
1995–96	568,775
1996–97	579,916
1999–99	399,755
1999–2000	674,531
2000–01	1,484,281
2001–02	1,286,053
2002–03	[1]1,300,000
2003–04	[2]850,000

[1] Estimate
[2] Provisional forecast figure

We do not hold a separate advertising budget. The majority of advertising relates to recruitment advertising in newspapers and journals. Figures for the four calendar years are as follows:

2000: 751,972
2001: 1,208,191
2002: 914,571
2003: 871,246

Sudan

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will take steps to send an independent international commission of inquiry to Darfur. [148543]

Hilary Benn: At present limited access in Darfur means that the various humanitarian agencies are unable to fully assess the situation on the ground, or to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

So we are calling on all parties to re-establish a ceasefire to allow unfettered humanitarian access. We have offered our good offices to all parties to help them reach a peaceful solution, and have suggested that there may be a role for the international community in assisting in the implementation of a peace deal.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had on human rights abuses in Darfur with the Sudanese authorities. [148643]

Hilary Benn: I discussed the human rights situation in Sudan with the President during my visit to Khartoum on 10 December 2003.

We continue to be concerned about the human rights situation in the whole of Sudan, regardless of religious or ethnic background. The promotion of human rights, through advocacy with the government and support for NGOs, remains one of our priorities.

Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of eligible heavily indebted poor countries committed to poverty reduction have received irrevocable debt relief. [149161]

Hilary Benn: Of the thirty-seven countries that could potentially qualify for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' (HIPC) Initiative, twenty-seven have reached Decision Point and have therefore received interim relief on their debt service payments. This means that they no longer have to make any repayments on a substantial portion (around two-thirds) of their debts and are able to use these resources for increased social expenditure. Of these thirty-seven countries, nine have reached Completion Point and have received an irrevocable reduction in their stock of debt. A further ten are expected to reach Completion Point by the end of 2004.

Middle East

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what projects his Department are involved in in *(a)* Gaza and *(b)* the West Bank, aimed at improving public access to water for (i) consumption and (ii) agriculture. [148929]

Hilary Benn: We have had broad engagement with the Palestinian Water Authority for several years supporting the effective delivery of water services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Four projects that have improved access to potable water, sanitation and environmental health in some of the poorest communities have just been brought to a successful conclusion. We currently fund two projects.

Our support for the Sustainable Management of the West Bank and Gaza Strip Aquifers project will enhance the Palestinian Water Authority's understanding of the western aquifer, which is an essential source of water in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The project includes consideration of the management and allocation of water resources between various uses—agriculture, industry and domestic—to allow the implications of alternative policies to be assessed. We also support a Water Access and Storage project to enable villages in the south Hebron district of the West Bank that do not have access to the networked water supply to obtain more secure access to drinking water and sustainable improved sanitation.

Global Health Fund

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the impact over the last 12 months of the Global Health Fund in tackling *(a)* HIV/AIDS, *(b)* tuberculosis and *(c)* malaria. [149074]

Hilary Benn: The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) was founded in January 2002. We recognise that the GFATM is still a young partnership and that it has just started to finance programmes within countries. The impact of GFATM is difficult to measure at this early stage but its 2002–03 annual report provides very good evidence of progress made to date on each of these diseases. Disbursement is now accelerating we expect to see more evidence of the impact of the Global Fund.

DFID has been working closely with the Board on effective ways to measure the GFATM's performance and evaluate its processes. We are working to ensure that the GFATM has a clear poverty focus, sound financial systems in place and alignment of its activities with national programmes and processes.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what the result has been of his Department's technical and financial contribution to the development and implementation of effective health programmes in the 16 African countries affected by his public service agreement target on mortality among children aged under five years; [148553]

(2) what the result has been of his Department's engagement with health sector development in 10 of the 16 countries in Africa affected by his Public Service Agreement target to reduce mortality amongst people aged under five years. [148549]

Hilary Benn: Of the 16 PSA countries, six have experienced a rise in child mortality between 1990 and 2001. The other ten have made varying degrees of progress but are all generally some way below the level needed to reach the PSA target.

Child mortality has multiple and complex causes. Economic decline and associated malnutrition is likely to have played a major role in constraining improvement in child health. Several African countries have also experienced conflict and civil unrest, which further undermine attempts to reduce child mortality. Other significant reasons for lack of progress include problems within the performance of the health sector itself and HIV/AIDS.

However, in a number of the PSA countries some encouraging progress has been achieved against intermediate health indicators. For example, in Ghana there has been progress with immunisation rates and deployment of nurses. Tanzania has seen improved immunisation rates, significant Vitamin A and insecticide-treated mosquito net distribution, improved

malaria treatment and strengthened health planning and management at district level. In Uganda, use of outpatient services has increased and immunisation rates have risen. All of these improvements have the potential to improve child mortality rates.

The Department for International Development's contribution to these improvements in Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and other countries has been provided in a number of ways, including through support for the health sector, budget support, and technical assistance. It is also important to recognise that DFID is not working alone, and that changes are due to the combined efforts of the countries concerned and other donors as well as ourselves. We will continue to work with other donors to ensure that affordable and sustainable health outcomes are given due priority and support in national planning and budgeting processes.

Iraq

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what studies have been made of cancer rates in Iraq *(a)* from 1991 to 2002 and *(b)* since the end of hostilities on 1 May 2003. [148270]

Hilary Benn: DFID is not aware of any studies of cancer rates carried out by the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Coalition Provisional Authority or other bodies. The ability accurately to measure localised increases in cancer rates—especially if there is cancer due to radiation, which can take years to develop—requires a well-developed national disease surveillance system, which Iraq does not currently have. The World Health Organisation plans to carry out a study to investigate the effects of the use of depleted uranium in ordnance used by military forces, which some individuals have claimed has caused an increase in cancer rates in Iraq, using that country as a key focus. This study will be subject to funding and to an improvement in the security situation.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department has spent on *(a)* secondments, *(b)* consultants and *(c)* security as part of its expenditure on humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq. [149212]

Hilary Benn: We have spent *(a)* £2.1 million on secondments, *(b)* £6.3 million on consultants and *(c)* £11.4 million on security measures in Iraq to date. In addition, we have recently contributed £3.6 million to UNSECOORD for security measures for UN operations in Iraq.

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what efforts his Department have made to employ Iraqis in development work in that country. [149162]

Hilary Benn: DFID's approach is to encourage the involvement and employment of Iraqis as much as possible in all the work we fund. For some projects, this has included direct employment of Iraqi staff and sub-contracting of Iraqi firms. By way of example, the vast majority of the construction work DFID has funded in southern Iraq has been sub-contracted to local firms. One of the criteria we have set for our £20 million Essential Infrastructure Programme has been to give priority to projects that create the most employment. We are also considering funding for direct employment generation schemes in southern Iraq.

Jharkand

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether his Department are involved in development work in the Indian state of Jharkand. [149164]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: We have agreed with the Union Government to working closely with four focus states committed to poverty reduction, including on their programmes of fiscal and public sector reform, increasing access to basic health, education, and urban services for the poor and empowerment of the marginalised. Although Jharkand is not one of DFID's focus states, through DFID India's National Programme we support the efforts of the Union Government and civil society nationwide. For example, Jharkand is covered by DFID support for basic education, maternal and child health and civil society; Jharkand is also a major beneficiary of DFID's Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme.

Low-income Countries

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of his Department's bilateral programme has gone to low-income countries in each of the last six years. [149068]

Hilary Benn: The information requested is shown in the following table. Note that it can be measured in a number of ways and the figures corresponding to the target in DFID's Public Service Agreement are those in the middle category i.e. all country specific bilateral assistance excluding humanitarian assistance.

DFID Bilateral Programme: Percentage To Low Income Countries[1]

	1997–98	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*	*2000–01*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*
Country Specific: All Recipient Countries						
Low Income Countries	65	73	67	76	78	80
Country Specific: All Recipient Countries(excluding Humanitarian Assistance						
Low Income Countries	67	72	75	78	78	80
Country Specific: Developing Countries only[2]						
Low Income Countries	72	78	71	79	82	84

[1] Countries are classified using 1998 GNI per capita estimates used by the DAC for aid flows up to 2002. This table covers only bilateral aid that can be attributed to individual countries. Low Income Countries are those with a GNI per capita in 1998 below $760.
[2] This includes all countries defined as developing by DAC, i.e. those on Part I of the DAC list of recipient countries.

Further details can be found in Table 4 of our annual publication 'Statistics on International Development', a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Malaria

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what support the United Kingdom will give developing countries to enact the World Health Organisation's recommendation that artemisinin-based combination therapy should be used in malaria outbreaks to prevent the disease developing further resistance to treatment. [149219]

Hilary Benn: Artemisinin (or Artesunate) is a naturally occurring substance that has been used in China in the treatment of malaria for a long period of time. It can be used by itself, but is more useful when combined with other effective anti-malarials as it enhances their useful life by decreasing the possibility of drug resistance. The World Health Organisation and Roll Back Malaria recommend the use of combined therapies as the first option wherever possible.

The Department for International Development has committed £48 million to Roll Back Malaria (RBM) over a four and a half year period (September 1999—March 2004). RBM provides coordinated support for sustainable action against malaria. This includes providing technical support to Governments to ensure that their anti-malarial drug policies enable those suffering from malaria to get early treatment and to access affordable and appropriate medicines. Their advice covers the use of artemisinin- based combination therapies. As an active partner of RBM, my Department works to ensure that RBM provides sound evidence based support for the effective use of resources, including those available from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to which we have committed a total of US$280 million.

DFID has also engaged more directly in partnerships with industry to transform research into drugs. We recently worked with GlaxoSmithKline, the WHO programme on Tropical Diseases Research and Liverpool University in the development of a cheap new drug called LAPDAP. In order to make the best use of LAPDAP, further research to combine it with artemisinin is being undertaken, managed under an umbrella organisation called the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), which DFID also supports. MMV has a portfolio of projects, which include the development of a number of artemisinin-based combination therapies using a variety of drugs. DFID is funding MMV with £1 million per year for five years. Since its inception in 1999 MMV has demonstrated significant progress towards reaching its objective of two new drugs in the next 10 years.

Artemisinin-based therapies are, like many new treatments, relatively expensive. This highlights the need for the UK Government to work with others to reduce the cost of effective new drugs. The Prime Minister's high-level Working Group on Increasing Access to Essential Medicines in the Developing World recommended differential pricing of essential medicines for the developing world. My Department is working with other Government Departments to secure greater international commitment to affordable pricing. The Government worked with G8 colleagues at last year's Evian summit to secure commitment to action on this issue in line with the Working Group's recommendations.

Millennium Development Goals

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress has been made by each country in meeting the millennium development goal to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day by 2015. [149062]

Hilary Benn: Comparable data needed to assess trends in the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day are available only at the regional level. The most recent data and estimates for 2015 are as follows.

Regional breakdown of poverty estimates in developing countries

	1990	*2000*	*2015*
East Asia and Pacific	29.4	14.5	2.3
Europe and Central Asia	1.4	4.2	1.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	11.0	10.8	7.6
Middle East and North Africa	2.1	2.8	1.2
South Asia	41.5	31.9	16.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	47.4	49.0	42.3
Total	28.3	21.6	12.5

Source:
World Bank, Global Economic Prospects 2004

It is clear from these figures that while the global picture of income poverty improved over the 1990s and we are likely to reach the target overall, progress across regions varies. The following table sets out the latest available information on the proportion of the population below $1 a day by country[1].

Year	*Country*	*Percentage of population below $1 a day*[2]
1995	Algeria	<2
1998	Armenia	12.8
2001	Azerbaijan	3.7
2000	Bangladesh	36.0
2000	Belarus	<2
1999	Bolivia	14.4
1998	Brazil	9.9
2001	Bulgaria	4.7
1998	Burundi	58.4
1996	Cameroon	33.4
1998	Chile	<2
2000	China	16.1
1998	Colombia	14.4
1998	Costa Rica	6.9
1995	Cote d'Ivoire	12.3
2000	Croatia	<2
1996	Czech Republic	<2
1998	Dominican Republic	<2
1995	Ecuador	20.2
2000	Egypt	3.1
1997	El Salvador	21.4
1998	Estonia	<2
1999–2000	Ethiopia	81.9
1998	Gambia	59.3
1998	Georgia	<2
1999	Ghana	44.8
2000	Guatemala	16.0
1998	Guyana	<2
1998	Honduras	23.8

Year	Country	Percentage of population below $1 a day[2]
1998	Hungary	<2
1999–2000	India	34.7
2000	Indonesia	7.2
1998	Iran	<2
2000	Jamaica	<2
1997	Jordan	<2
1996	Kazakhstan	1.5
1997	Kenya	23.0
1998	Korea, Rep (South)	<2
2000	Kyrgyzstan	2.0
1997–98	Laos	26.3
1998	Latvia	<2
2000	Lithuania	<2
1998	Macedonia (FYR of)	<2
1999	Madagascar	49.1
1997–98	Malawi	41.7
1997	Malaysia	<2
1995	Mauritania	28.6
1998	Mexico	8.0
2001	Moldova	22.0
1995	Mongolia	13.9
1999	Morocco	<2
1996	Mozambique	37.9
1995	Nepal	37.7
1998	Nicaragua	82.3
1995	Niger	61.4
1997	Nigeria	70.2
1998	Pakistan	13.4
1998	Panama	7.6
1998	Paraguay	19.5
1996	Peru	15.5
2000	Philippines	14.6
1998	Poland	<2
2000	Romania	2.1
2000	Russian Federation	6.1
1995	Senegal	26.3
1996	Slovak Republic	<2
1998	Slovenia	<2
1995	South Africa	<2
1995–96	Sri Lanka	6.6
1998	Tajikistan	10.3
2000	Thailand	<2
1995	Tunisia	<2
2000	Turkey	<2
1998	Turkmenistan	12.1
1996	Uganda	82.2
1999	Ukraine	2.9
1998	Uruguay	<2
1998	Uzbekistan	19.1
1998	Venezuela	15.0
1998	Vietnam	17.7
1998	Yemen	15.7
1998	Zambia	63.7

[1] Countries without any internationally comparable data have been excluded from the table.

[2] The percentage of the population living below the commonly used international $1 a day standard, measured in 1993 international prices and adjusted for local currency using purchasing power parities

Source:

World Bank "2003 World Development Indicators"

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the percentage change between 1990 and 2003 was in the numbers of people below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption in each country covered by the millennium development goals. [149063]

Hilary Benn: The information we have ready access to relates to the percentage of people below minimum levels of dietary energy consumption not absolute numbers and is not available for all countries[1]. The most recent information relates to the period 1998–2000. The available information and the change over the period is given in the following table.

[1] Countries without any internationally comparable data have been excluded from the table.

Country	1990–92	1998–2000	Change over period (percentage points)
Afghanistan	63	70	-7
Algeria	5	6	-1
Angola	61	50	11
Bangladesh	35	35	0
Benin	19	13	6
Bolivia	26	23	3
Botswana	17	25	-8
Brazil	13	10	3
Burkina Faso	23	23	0
Burma	10	6	4
Burundi	49	69	-20
Cambodia	43	36	7
Cameroon	32	25	7
Central African Republic	49	44	5
Chad	58	32	26
Chile	8	4	4
China	16	9	7
Colombia	17	13	4
Congo (Dem Rep)	32	73	-41
Congo	37	32	5
Costa Rica	6	5	1
Cote d'Ivoire	18	15	3
Cuba	5	13	-8
Dominican Republic	27	26	1
Ecuador	8	5	3
Egypt	5	4	1
El Salvador	12	14	-2
Eritrea	[2]—	58	
Ethiopia	[2]—	44	
Gabon	11	8	3
Gambia	21	21	0
Ghana	35	12	23
Guatemala	14	25	-11
Guinea	40	32	8
Haiti	64	50	14
Honduras	23	21	2
India	25	24	1
Indonesia	[2]—	6	
Iran	4	5	-1
Iraq	7	27	-20
Jamaica	14	9	5
Jordan	4	6	-2
Kenya	47	44	3
Korea Dem Rep (North)	18	34	-16
Kuwait	22	4	18
Laos	29	24	5
Lebanon	[2]—	3	
Lesotho	27	26	1
Liberia	33	39	-6
Madagascar	35	40	-5
Malawi	49	33	16
Malaysia	3	[2]—	
Mali	25	20	5
Mauritania	14	12	2
Mauritius	6	5	1
Mexico	5	5	0
Mongolia	34	42	-8
Morocco	6	7	-1
Mozambique	69	55	14
Namibia	15	9	6
Nepal	19	19	0
Nicaragua	30	29	1
Niger	42	36	6

Country	1990–92	1998–2000	Change over period (percentage points)
Nigeria	13	7	6
Pakistan	25	19	6
Panama	19	18	1
Papua New Guinea	25	27	-2
Paraguay	18	14	4
Peru	40	11	29
Philippines	26	23	3
Rwanda	34	40	-6
Saudi Arabia	4	3	1
Senegal	23	25	-2
Sierra Leone	46	47	-1
Somalia	67	71	-4
Sri Lanka	29	23	6
Sudan	31	21	10
Swaziland	10	12	-2
Syria	5	3	2
Tanzania	36	47	-11
Thailand	28	18	10
Togo	28	23	5
Trinidad & Tobago	13	12	1
Uganda	23	21	2
United Arab Emirates	3	[2]	
Uruguay	6	3	3
Venezuela	11	21	-10
Vietnam	27	18	9
Yemen	36	33	3
Zambia	45	50	-5
Zimbabwe	43	38	5

[2] not available

Source:

World Development Indicators 2003

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress has been made by each country in meeting the millennium development goals to halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. [149064]

Hilary Benn: Progress towards the hunger target varies between countries. According to the UN Human Development Report 2003 in 21 countries a larger proportion of people are going hungry than in 1990. Elsewhere progress is being made, such as in the three Sub-Saharan Africa countries with the highest proportions of people suffering from hunger in 1990 (Mozambique, Angola and Chad) where estimates of hunger have dropped considerably.

I refer the hon. Member to my other answer [UIN 149063] for the most recent trend data of the percentage of people below minimum levels of dietary energy consumption.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the change was between 1990 and 2003 in the share of the poorest quintile in national consumption in each country covered by the millennium development goals. [149066]

Hilary Benn: Quintile shares are calculated from income and consumption surveys. Developing countries carry out such surveys relatively infrequently and the information available does not allow us to examine changes between 1990 and 2003. The following table gives the latest statistics available by country and the year to which it refers[1].

[1] Countries without any internationally comparable data have been excluded from the table.

Latest statistics available

Country	Shares of income or consumption of poorest quintile	Year
Algeria	7	1995
Armenia	7	1998
Azerbaijan	7	2001
Bangladesh	9	2000
Belarus	8	2000
Bolivia	4	1999
Brazil	2	1998
Bulgaria	7	2001
Burkina Faso	4	1998
Burundi	5	1998
Cambodia	7	1997
Cameroon	5	1996
Chile	3	1998
China	6	1998
Colombia	3	1996
Costa Rica	4	1997
Cote d'Ivoire	7	1995
Croatia	8	2001
Czech Republic	10	1996
Dominican Republic	5	1998
Ecuador	5	1995
Egypt	9	1999
El Salvador	3	1998
Estonia	7	1998
Ethiopia	2	2000
Gambia	4	1998
Georgia	6	2000
Ghana	6	1999
Guatemala	4	1998
Guyana	4	1999
Honduras	2	1996
Hong Kong	5	1996
Hungary	10	1998
India	8	1997
Indonesia	8	2000
Iran	5	1998
Israel	7	1997
Jamaica	7	2000
Jordan	8	1997
Kazakhstan	8	2001
Kenya	6	1997
Korea, Rep (South)	8	1998
Kyrgyzstan	9	2001
Laos	8	1997
Latvia	8	1998
Lesotho	1	1995
Lithuania	8	2000
Macedonia (FYR of)	8	1998
Madagascar	6	1999
Malawi	5	1997
Malaysia	4	1997
Mauritania	6	1995
Mexico	3	1998
Moldova	7	2001
Mongolia	6	1998
Morocco	7	1999
Mozambique	6	1997
Nepal	8	1996
Nicaragua	2	1998
Niger	3	1995
Nigeria	4	1997
Pakistan	9	1999
Panama	4	1997
Papua New Guinea	5	1996
Paraguay	2	1998
Peru	4	1996
Philippines	5	2000
Poland	8	1998
Romania	8	2000
Russian Federation	5	2000
Senegal	6	1995

Latest statistics available

Country	*Shares of income or consumption of poorest quintile*	*Year*
Singapore	5	1998
Slovak Republic	9	1996
Slovenia	9	1998
South Africa	2	1995
Sri Lanka	8	1995
St Lucia	5	1995
Tajikistan	8	1998
Thailand	6	2000
Tunisia	6	1995
Turkey	6	2000
Turkmenistan	6	1998
Uganda	7	1996
Ukraine	9	1999
Uruguay	4	1998
Uzbekistan	9	2000
Venezuela	3	1998
Vietnam	8	1998
Yemen	7	1998
Zambia	3	1998
Zimbabwe	5	1995

Source:
World Development Indicators 2003

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress each country has made in meeting the millennium development goal that, by 2015, all children will be able to commence a full course of primary schooling. [149067]

Hilary Benn: Generally, progress towards the 2015 target has been good but huge challenges still remain. The Education For All Global Monitoring Report identifies 36 countries at serious risk of not achieving the goal, of which 22 are in sub-Saharan Africa. There is increased evidence since the World Education Forum in April 2000, that many countries now have better education sector policies for making progress. Increased international support, including our own commitment of £1 billion over the period 2002–07, is helping African Governments to improve primary school enrolment.

A comprehensive table listing the primary net enrolment ratio for each country where comparable data is available can be found in Table 5 in the statistical annex of the recent Education For All Global Monitoring Report (www.efareport.unesco.org).

Trade Liberalisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what input his Department has made into the *(a)* design and *(b)* implementation of the initiative by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to help developing countries to overcome problems in adjusting to a more liberal trading environment. [149102]

Hilary Benn: One of the more positive outcomes of the WTO ministerial in Cancun was the joint announcement by the World Bank and the IMF of a new trade-related initiative. Its overall aim is to assist poor countries with the adjustment costs of transition to trade liberalisation and help them capitalise on the potential benefits. DFID, in collaboration with others, has for some time been actively encouraging the World Bank and IMF to address more systematically the adjustment costs of trade liberalisation and the need for trade-related technical assistance. The collapse of negotiations in Cancun allows more time for the initiative to be developed and to encourage the Bank and Fund to work together more closely in designing mechanisms.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development which countries receive *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral aid from the UK Government; and how much each received from his Department in (i) 2002–03 and (ii) 2003–04. [149158]

Hilary Benn: Information on expenditure by the UK Government on development assistance is given in our annual publication "Statistics on International Development', a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Tables 7.1–7.5 (pages 115–152) contain the information requested for bilateral assistance in 2002–03. The column headed "Total DFID Programme" hows how much each country received from DFID while that headed "Total Gross Public Expenditure" gives total Government spend. Figures for 2003–04 are not yet available.

Table 8 shows contributions to multilateral organisations from both DFID and the Government as a whole for 2002–03. By definition, this expenditure cannot be broken down by country as the UK contribution is pooled with those of other donors. Figures for 2003–04 are not yet available.

UN Microcredit Year

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what preparations his Department are making for the UN Microcredit Year in 2005. [149428]

Hilary Benn: DFID strongly supports the underlying principles of the UN's Year of Microcredit 2005, which seeks to increase international efforts to spread microfinance to more low income clients worldwide. Donors, including DFID, have supported policies and institutions to extend the outreach of sustainable microcredit and other financial services to the poor for many years. DFID has held several discussions with the UN organisers and has been instrumental in linking them with The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), which promotes best practice in the microfinance industry. We intend to support specific events in the UK and will announce these this autumn.

Background

UN Year of Microcredit 2005

The UN General Assembly, through resolution 53/197 in December 1998, proclaimed 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit. Following consultations with Member States in the second half of 2003, a Programme of Action for the Year has been agreed. The UN Capital Development Fund and the UN Secretariat's Department of Economic and Social Affairs will jointly coordinate the preparation activities of the UN system for the Year.

The UK and others supported wording in the Programme of Action resolution that emphasised the wider contribution of microfinance, and financial sector development, beyond a concentration on microcredit itself. Hence the Programme of Action often refers to microfinance, in addition to microcredit, and refers to savings, asset creation, and economic security.

The UN Programme proposes that the Year will be launched in November 2004, that Member States will establish National Committees, and that 2004 should be a year of preparation. DFID officials have met initially with UNCDF Secretariat staff, and also with Citigroup, one of the private sector sponsors. UNCDF have noted that donor funding will not be needed at the international level.

The key to the success of the Year will be UN countries adopting the General Assembly Resolution, and signing up to active steps to enable expansion of access to microfinance at local level. Whilst UN "Years" are vulnerable to a charge of more talk and less action, the Year of Microcredit is already attracting attention from private and public sectors including Citigroup, Bank of International Settlements and others.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Microfinance is very likely to take an interest in the International Year of Microcredit. The Secretary of State met with them on 21 October. DFID officials are also checking whether other Departments will have an interest in the Year (Treasury, DTI). Following further meetings, DFID will recommend a programme of action for the Year to the Secretary of State.

DFID Support to Extend Access to Microfinance

Current DFID-supported initiatives also include:

The £18 million Financial Deepening Challenge Fund, using innovative mechanisms to encourage banks and other financial service providers to extend financial services for the poor (www.challengefunds.org).

AfriCap (www.africapfund.com), specialist equity fund investing in emerging microfinance institutions in Africa.

MicroSave-Africa (www.MicroSave-Africa.com) a programme that tests new pro-poor savings, insurance, and loan products and promotes market-led microfinance.

In addition, country-led programmes to develop the microfinance industry are under way in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, India and Bangladesh.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the United States since the breakdown of the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Cancun about the likely impact of the United States Farm Bill on the *(a)* economies of and *(b)* living standards in, developing countries. [149118]

Hilary Benn: The Government conducted intensive discussion with the United States officials and ministers when the US Farm Bill was first introduced in 2002. Since Cancun there has been continuing contact between UK and US officials about all aspects of the WTO Round, including on the question of US domestic subsidies and their potential impact on the livelihoods of producers in developing countries.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many people made up the delegations of the developing countries at the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Cancún. [149126]

Hilary Benn: According to the official list of delegates provided by the WTO Secretariat, there were over 1700 accredited delegates from Developing countries at the WTO ministerial conference in Cancun.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether the Government of Zimbabwe have reduced their arrears to the World Bank since December 2002. [147390]

Hilary Benn: The Government of Zimbabwe have not reduced their arrears to the World Bank since December 2002. At the end of October 2003, Zimbabwe's arrears were approximately £150 million.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of *(a)* the level and *(b)* the geographical distribution of food shortages in Zimbabwe. [148092]

Hilary Benn: The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee's survey in April last year estimated that approximately 4.4 million people in rural areas and 1.1 million people in urban areas would require food aid during the pre-harvest months of January, February and March 2004. However, it is now clear that this figure is an underestimate and is being revised upwards to 5.1 million people in rural areas. Results of a comprehensive urban vulnerability assessment are yet to be released, but are also expected to show a significant increase in people requiring humanitarian assistance.

DFID works in close collaboration with UN agencies and other development partners to monitor the levels and geographical distribution of food shortages throughout Zimbabwe. Relevant factors include employment levels, commodity prices, income levels, agricultural activity and rainfall levels, HIV prevalence rates and alternative coping mechanisms.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the extent of political abuse by the Zimbabwe Government of food aid provided by his Department. [148093]

Hilary Benn: The World Food Programme and others distributing international food aid all have clear procedures and monitoring systems in place to ensure that humanitarian aid is distributed according to need. These systems are working well and there have been no significant cases of political interference with international aid, including that provided by the UK, in recent months. Along with the UN, EU and other donors, we continue to make it clear to the Zimbabwe Government that we will not tolerate political interference in the distribution of food aid.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of how much food aid is reaching the people of Zimbabwe. [148128]

Hilary Benn: In December 2003, the WFP and other agencies distributed general rations to 3.5 million beneficiaries, while many other vulnerable people received food through targeted programmes. As well as being a major contributor to WFP, DFID's separate NGO programme is reaching over a million beneficiaries a month through home-based care, school and therapeutic feeding schemes.

The level of food aid reaching the people of Zimbabwe is a credit to the logistical capabilities of the WFP and the dedication of the implementing NGOs. Incidents of political interference remain few and isolated. DFID continues to work in close collaboration with the WFP and other partners to ensure that food aid is distributed in an apolitical manner and that those in most need receive assistance.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Professor Sir Roy Meadow

Tim Loughton: To ask the Solicitor-General in how many cases in which parents were charged with causing the death of a child, was expert evidence given by Professor Sir Roy Meadow. [145032]

The Solicitor-General: The recently published judgment in Angela Cannings has raised concerns over the safety of a number of convictions and as such will have serious and far-reaching implications. The Court of Appeal said that in relation to unexplained infant deaths when the outcome of the trial depended exclusively or almost exclusively on a serious disagreement between distinguished and reputable experts it will often be unsafe to proceed.

As soon as the Court gave its judgement that Angela Cannings' conviction was unsafe, the Attorney and I requested that all cases which potentially involve sudden infant death syndrome be identified as quickly as possible. By the time the Court published its written judgement some 258 convictions involving the murder, manslaughter or infanticide of an infant under two by its parent had been identified.

Those convictions will now be reviewed as a matter of urgency to establish how many were convictions that the Court of Appeal judgement in Angela Cannings indicated may be unsafe. Priority will be accorded to those persons who are still serving a sentence of imprisonment. While I cannot give any figures at present for the number of cases in which parents were charged with causing the death of a child and in which expert evidence was given, the identification and review of the 258 convictions may enable further and more detailed information to be given in due course.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Solicitor-General how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men are serving jail sentences as a result of court cases in which expert evidence was given by Professor Sir Roy Meadow. [145033]

The Solicitor-General: The recently published judgment in Angela Cannings has raised concerns over the safety of a number of convictions and as such will have serious and far-reaching implications. The Court of Appeal said that in relation to unexplained infant deaths when the outcome of the trial depended exclusively or almost exclusively on a serious disagreement between distinguished and reputable experts it will often be unsafe to proceed.

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Those convictions will now be reviewed as a matter of urgency to establish how many were convictions that the Court of Appeal judgment in Angela Cannings indicated may be unsafe. Priority will be accorded to those persons who are still serving a sentence of imprisonment. While I cannot give any figures at present for those men and women who are serving jail sentences in which Professor Meadow gave evidence, the process of identifying and reviewing the convictions I have mentioned above may enable further and more detailed information to be given in due course.

Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Solicitor-General how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in (i) the Department and (ii) departmental agencies in the last 12 months. [147986]

The Solicitor-General: Headquarters was notified that 81 identity cards/access cards had been lost and five had been stolen.

Twenty eight security passes were reported as lost in the Treasury Solicitor's Department within the last one to two months. All 28 passes were reported as lost rather than stolen.

Five security passes were reported as lost in the Serious Fraud Office within the last 12 months. All 5 were reported as lost rather than stolen.

Six security passes were reported as lost in HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate within the last 12 months. All six were reported as lost rather than stolen.

No security passes were reported as either stolen or lost by my own department, the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers, over that period.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Adult Learning Grant

Ann Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate he has made of the number of people in the Brentford and Isleworth constituency who will benefit from the pilot of the Adult Learning Grant. [146321]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Adult Learning Grant is being piloted in one further education college in Brentwood and Isleworth. We estimate that about 20 adults studying full-time at this college for First Level 2 or First Level 3 qualifications will benefit from the grant this academic year.

Basic Skills

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what information his Department collects on the level of basic skills. [147451]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) collates adult basic skills data at several levels. First through evaluation, research and economic analysis; second through a continuous programme of research led by the National Research and Development Council (NRDC); third through our marketing and communication strategy; and finally through the collection of factual data and information on all learners participating in programmes.

"The Skills for Life Survey: A National Needs and Impact Survey of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT skills" (DfES, October 2003) provides an up-to-date assessment of the level of basic skills need against the National Standards for literacy, numeracy and ICT among adults aged 16 to 65 in England. A copy of this survey has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

The National Research and Development Centre lead a continuous programme of research to ensure that implementation and future development are based firmly on evidence.

The Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, the Prison Service and other key partners report regularly on delivery, learner participation and delivery. They provide an invaluable source of information on the people taking part and the direct impact the strategy is having.

The DfES also collects regular information on the number of basic skills qualifications that are achieved and count towards the Skills for Life PSA targets. We are confident that we have achieved the July 2003 target of 470,000 learner achievements.

Behaviour Improvement Programmes

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his Answer of 8 January (145433), if he will list the 60 Behaviour Improvement Programme local education authorities and the precise sum each will receive in the current financial year. [147690]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The following table provides the information required.

Local education authorities—2003–04

	Total amount (£)
Phase 1	
Bradford	1,442,000
Brent	1,442,000
Camden	1,442,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,442,000
Lewisham	1,442,000
Sheffield	1,442,000
Islington	1,442,000
Waltham Forest	1,442,000
Rochdale	1,442,000
Birmingham	1,442,000
Salford	1,442,000
Barking and Dagenham	1,400,335
Oldham	1,442,000
Wolverhampton	1,442,000
Manchester	1,442,000
Hackney	1,400,335
Knowsley	1,442,000
Greenwich	1,400,335
Enfield	1,442,000
Lambeth	1,400,335
Nottingham	1,400,335
Southwark	1,442,000
Newham	1,442,000
Haringey	1,442,000
Bristol	1,400,335
Tower Hamlets	1,400,335
Leeds	1,442,000
Westminster	1,442,000
Bolton	1,442,000
Liverpool	1,442,000
Hounslow	1,400,335
Reading	1,442,000
Slough	1,442,000
K&C	1,400,335
Phase 2	
Barnsley	1,400,000
Blackburn and Darwen	1,400,000
Blackpool	1,400,000
Doncaster	1,400,000
Ealing	1,400,000
Gateshead	1,400,000
Halton	1,400,000
Hartlepool	1,400,000
Hull	1,400,000
Leicester	1,400,000
Luton	1,400,000
Middlesbrough	1,400,000
Newcastle	1,400,000
North Tyneside	1,400,000
Redcar and Cleveland	1,400,000
Rotherham	1,400,000
Sandwell	1,400,000
Sefton	1,400,000
Solihull	1,400,000
South Tyneside	1,400,000
St. Helens	1,400,000
Stockton	1,400,000
Stoke	1,400,000
Sunderland	1,400,000
Wandsworth	1,400,000
Wirral	1,400,000

The minor variations between Phase 1 LEAs reflect successful bids for additional measures.

Biodefence Research

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of whether universities satisfactorily ensure physical, personnel and information security in the performance of biodefence research; what assessment he has made of the case for moving such research from university laboratories to secure national laboratories; and if he will make a statement. [147541]

Mr. Blunkett: I have been asked to reply.

We do not comment on detailed security matters such as these but the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 provides controls on both physical and personnel security measures for premises holding dangerous substances.

It has conferred new powers on the police under Part 7 and Schedule 5 and was implemented 31 May 2002. These include:

Notification Process—"the occupier of any premises" where a Schedule 5 substance is "kept or used" is required to notify the Home Office.

Confers powers on the police to inspect such premises and give directions on protective security advice.

Confers powers on the police to seek information and obliges laboratories to provide information to them.

Bullying

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many incidents of bullying have taken place in schools in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley in each of the last three years. [148372]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Data on bullying are not collected centrally and there is no reliable basis for an estimate of prevalence. However, any level of bullying is too high and we are determined to help schools to tackle the problem. Our guidance pack "Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence" and the anti-bullying website: www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying offer detailed advice on preventing and addressing bullying. I have also recently launched our anti-bullying Charter, which I hope schools will sign and use. It is accompanied by a summary of effective practice to help schools review and enhance their anti-bullying policies. We are also currently running a series of England-wide regional anti-bullying conferences for schools and other partners to share good practice.

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what research his Department has commissioned on bullying in schools; [148102]

(2) what data his Department collates on bullying in schools. [148103]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In March 2003 I launched a DfES-funded report summarising recent research on children and young people's views on bullying. This is available on the Department's website at www.dfes.gov.uk/research. Rather than collecting data from schools, which would add to their workload, we are concentrating on helping schools to reduce bullying. Disseminating good practice is crucial to this. So we have made our anti-bullying guidance pack "Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence" and the anti-bullying Charter which I launched in November available to every school in England. And we are currently running a series of England-wide regional conferences for schools and other partners to share good practice. This is in addition to staff training materials on bullying which we are making available to all secondary schools through our Key Stage 3 strategy.

Career Guidance

Charles Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will make a statement on the place of career guidance within the provision by the Connexions Service. [149511]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* Career guidance is a key part of the work of Connexions. All 13–19 year olds in England have access to support on making learning and career choices from Connexions. The level of support each individual receives is differentiated according to need. Support is provided in a range of ways, including through: one to one and group sessions with a Connexions Personal Adviser; Connexions Direct—a telephone helpline, e-mail and web-chat facility, open from 8am to 2am, 365 days a year; and the careers information materials available in Connexions Resource centres in schools, colleges and Connexions one-stop shops.

Charles Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether it is his policy to ensure that *(a)* access to and *(b)* provision of careers guidance and advice is equal between young people (i) in education and (ii) not in employment and training. [149514]

Margaret Hodge: All young people can access Connexions services on an equal basis through their schools and colleges, one-stop shops and Connexions Direct. Provision of careers advice and guidance —as with all the services provided by Connexions—is differentiated according to need. This applies to all young people, irrespective of whether or not they are currently in education, employment or training.

Charles Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what qualifications are required of Connexions personal advisers who are expected to provide careers guidance and advice. [149515]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* The Secretary of State recognises three specific qualifications for Connexions Personal Advisers who give in depth career guidance to young people in the statutory client group; these are the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG), NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance (including specified units) and the Diploma in Careers Guidance (DCG). DfES provides funding to support the initial training of careers guidance professionals to help encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds to move into the role of specialist career guidance practitioner.

Children Bill

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what discussions have been held with local government representatives about the forthcoming Children Bill. [148783]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* I have worked closely with the Inter Agency Group, which brings together local government, health and voluntary sector representative bodies, to ensure that we understand their views fully in developing the Children Bill, as well as the other work the Government are taking forward following the publication of "Every Child Matters". Officials have also regularly met representatives of local government to discuss policy development. Our work has also been informed by the extensive consultation we undertook on "Every Child Matters". All areas of local government were fully represented at the nine regional consultation events and we are pleased to have received a huge response to the written consultation, including many submissions from local government representative groups and local authorities. I have also met individual local authority representatives in a number of meetings and on a range of visits.

Connexions Service

Charles Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many Connexions Service clients there were in each year since its establishment, broken down *(a)* by Connexions service area and *(b)* by (i) young people not in education, employment or training and (ii) others. [149512]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 20 January 2004]*: The following tables show the number of Connexions Service clients (young people aged 13 to 19 known to Connexions) for the period 2001–02, 2002–03 and 2003–04.

Table 1 shows those clients known not to be in education, employment and training, and other young people who have completed compulsory education.

Table 2 shows the number of clients of compulsory education age for the operational years of 2002–3 and 2003–4. This information was not collected in 2001–2.

Table 1: Number of clients/young people who have completed compulsory Education known to connexions

	Not in Education, Employment or Training			*Other*			*Total*		
	2001–02	*2002–03*	*2003–04*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*	*2003–04*	*2001–02*	*2002–03*	*2003–04*
ENGLAND	44,740	142,328	122,742	506,313	1,521,504	1,939,517	551,053	1,663,832	2,062,259
Bedfordshire and Luton		2,333	1,605		24,425	24,393		26,758	25,998
Berkshire		1,884	1,780		29,792	30,660		31,676	32,440
Birmingham and Solihull		3,672	4,000		53,283	50,775		56,955	54,775
Black Country	6,337	6,914	4,489	39,085	44,611	47,387	45,422	51,525	51,876
Bournemouth Dorset and Poole		2,019	1,022		24,862	26,123		26,881	27,145
Cambs and Peterborough		2,423	1,851		25,784	26,190		28,206	28,041
Central London		5,998	3,733		37,757	41,588		43,754	45,321
Cheshire and Warrington	2,694	2,978	2,196	33,726	37,064	37,318	36,420	40,042	39,514
Cornwall and Devon	3,522	3,798	2,921	60,277	60,757	61,690	63,799	64,555	64,611
County Durham		2,774	2,053		15,652	16,860		18,426	18,913
Coventry and Warwick	2,688	2,854	2,253	26,052	32,540	32,880	28,740	35,394	35,133
Cumbria	1,935	1,789	1,199	18,498	19,678	19,867	20,433	21,467	21,066
Derbyshire		4,407	2,784		38,195	37,371		42,602	40,155
East London		8,281	6,973		82,871	87,465		91,152	94,438
Essex Southend and Thurrock		5,449	2,816		65,974	65,928		71,422	68,744
Gloucestershire		852	856		16,716	23,687		17,569	24,543
Greater Manchester		11,073	7,961		109,572	110,988		120,646	118,949
Greater Merseyside	8,918	8,431	6,659	62,252	61,931	65,154	71,170	70,362	71,813
Hereford and Worcester		1,684	1,218		26,626	26,966		28,311	28,183
Hertfordshire		1,835	1,521		43,967	38,799		45,801	40,320
Humber	3,486	3,982	4,049	36,635	33,156	35,457	40,121	37,139	39,506
Kent		3,788	4,014		76,761	66,520		80,548	70,534
Lancashire		5,769	4,315		57,385	57,348		63,155	61,663
Leicestershire		3,755	1,753		37,541	36,461		41,295	38,214
Lincolnshire and Rutland	1,167	1,487	1,332	23,540	27,110	27,033	24,707	28,597	28,366
Milton Keynes Ox and Bucks	1,625	2,820	2,590	48,647	50,046	50,184	50,272	52,867	52,774
Norfolk		1,523	920		27,222	26,694		28,745	27,614
North London	2,971	4,071	2,317	35,750	40,711	43,659	38,721	44,782	45,976
Northamptonshire		1,489	1,725		24,325	22,925		25,814	24,649
Northumberland			654			12,053			12,707
Nottinghamshire		2,951	1,937		40,886	43,823		43,837	45,760
Shropshire Telford and Wrekin	1,122	1,086	736	18,169	17,946	18,112	19,291	19,031	18,849
Somerset		837	463		16,477	17,758		17,314	18,221
South Central		3,065	2,883		83,429	71,470		86,494	74,352
South London	4,498	4,282	2,107	47,023	47,418	49,040	51,521	51,700	51,147
South Yorkshire	5,604	6,661	4,061	46,399	48,121	50,781	52,003	54,783	54,841
Staffordshire		5,551	3,538		41,258	42,724		46,809	46,262
Suffolk	2,204	2,754	1,332	30,508	27,866	25,591	32,712	30,620	26,924
Surrey		1,010	1,254		44,580	37,174		45,591	38,428
Sussex		3,087	1,608		60,234	54,453		63,321	56,061
Tees Valley		4,305	2,374		29,573	29,710		33,879	32,084
Tyne and Wear		8,385	4,481		41,462	43,943		49,847	48,423
West London		5,347	3,232		50,608	49,118		55,954	52,350
West of England	2,057	2,447	2,251	33,667	30,921	35,957	35,724	33,367	38,208
West Yorkshire		9,357	6,154		86,292	86,413		95,649	92,567
Wiltshire and Swindon		1,284	937		21,647	23,256		22,931	24,192
York and North Yorkshire		2,310	917		32,497	30,155		34,807	31,072

Notes:

1. The information compiled represents averages of monthly data provided by Connexions Partnerships from their own management information and tracking systems.
2. The first 15 Connexions Partnerships commenced in April and September 2001. The second and third phases of Connexions Partnerships started from April 2002.

Table 2: Number of clients/young people of compulsory education age known to connexions
Note: This data was not collected in 2001

	2002–03	*2003–04*
ENGLAND	1,590,390	2,075,363
Bedfordshire and Luton	26,123	26,911
Berkshire	26,241	28,576
Birmingham and Solihull	62,480	62,255
Black Country	54,111	53,216
Bournemouth Dorset and Poole	24,894	26,113
Cambs and Peterborough	32,435	36,771

Table 2: Number of clients/young people of compulsory education age known to connexions
Note: This data was not collected in 2001

	2002–03	*2003–04*
Central London	25,483	34,764
Cheshire and Warrington	42,575	40,953
Cornwall and Devon	61,397	63,356
County Durham	24,065	24,982
Coventry and Warwick	35,752	38,878
Cumbria	25,139	22,668
Derbyshire	32,739	41,328

Table 2: Number of clients/young people of compulsory education age known to connexions
Note: This data was not collected in 2001

	2002–03	2003–04
East London	87,214	90,610
Essex Southend and Thurrock	80,224	81,980
Gloucestershire	24,131	24,426
Greater Manchester	132,465	128,915
Greater Merseyside	70,652	54,292
Hereford and Worcester	33,774	34,309
Hertfordshire	38,005	39,812
Humber	40,781	46,996
Kent	49,959	62,486
Lancashire	56,010	72,163
Leicestershire	34,106	40,584
Lincolnshire and Rutland	26,179	27,985
Milton Keynes Ox and Bucks	51,109	57,699
Norfolk	37,171	36,928
North London	30,237	40,399
Northamptonshire	29,769	26,853
Northumberland[1]		11,722
Nottinghamshire	48,028	45,433
Shropshire Telford and Wrekin	13,756	12,959
Somerset	16,794	15,653
South Central	59,204	55,012
South London	42,835	39,762
South Yorkshire	62,325	64,015
Staffordshire	43,324	35,941
Suffolk	31,995	32,387
Surrey	22,015	30,913
Sussex	41,237	52,233
Tees Valley	40,033	36,911
Tyne and Wear	49,471	45,569
West London	38,436	42,161
West of England	34,266	36,953
West Yorkshire	101,715	105,622
Wiltshire and Swindon	21,278	22,955
York and North Yorkshire	30,284	29,490

[1] Northumberland Connexions Partnership commenced in April 2003.

Notes:
The information complied represents averages of monthly data provided by Connexions partnerships from their own management information and tracking systems.

Charles Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether it is the policy of the Connexions Service to give special attention to young people not in education, employment or training. [149513]

Margaret Hodge *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* It is the policy of the Connexions Service to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. It does so through preventive work with young people who are in education employment and training and targeted, individual work with those who are not.

E-registration

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the procedures are for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the funding by the Department of schools' e-registration systems. [148745]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Before schools can be awarded Capital Modernisation funding for electronic registration they must submit plans to the Department showing how they would spend it. Departmental officials only authorise local education authorities to release funding to a school when they are satisfied that its plans comply with stringent conditions set by the project. Local education authorities are then expected to work with schools to ensure the efficiency of systems installed.

We have also commissioned the University of Warwick to conduct an independent evaluation of the project. A summary of interim findings is available on the school attendance website, http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance/. A final report is expected in February 2006.

Gap Years

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what representations he has received from *(a)* schools, *(b)* parents and *(c)* pupils about the intentions of year 12 or lower 6th students expecting to complete A-levels in summer 2005 and considering whether to take a gap year in 2005–06. [148504]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: At December 2003 the Department for Education and Skills had received the following representations about young people's gap year intentions for 2005/06: nine from schools, three from parents and three from pupils.

Mr. Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what discussions he intends to have with charitable organisations in respect of the impact of his proposals for higher education funding on gap year activities in 2005–06. [149026]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 19 January 2003]:* There are no plans for discussions with charitable organisations on the impact of the proposals for higher education funding on gap year activities in 2005–06.

The Higher Education White Paper "The Future of Higher Education" was published on 22 January 2003 and there was an extensive consultation exercise associated with it.

In addition, the impact of higher education funding on gap year intentions is a matter regularly discussed by officials and Gap Year Providers and representative groups at meetings of DfES' informal Gap Year Consultation Group.

School Exclusions (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* short-term, *(b)* long-term and *(c)* permanent (i) high schools and (ii) primary schools exclusions there were in Lancashire in each of the last three years. [148373]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Information on non-permanent (fixed term) exclusions is not yet available centrally.

The Department has recently started to collect information from local education authorities on both fixed term and permanent exclusions on a termly basis. The first term's data are not yet available.

The information requested on the numbers of permanent exclusions is given in the table.

Lancashire LEA maintained primary and secondary schools: number of permanent exclusions, 1999/2000 to 2001/02

	1999-2000		2000-01[1]		2001-02[1]	
	Number	Percentage of school population[2]	Number	Percentage of school population[2]	Number	Percentage of school population[2]
Primary[3]	19	0.02	34	0.03	39	0.04
Secondary[3]	144	0.19	207	0.28	240	0.32
Total	167	0.09	250	0.14	299	0.17

[1] The 2000/01 and 2001/02 figures shown in the table are based upon the Annual Schools census returns together with LEA level amendments reported by LEAs as part of the data checking process.
[2] Number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of school population.
[3] Includes middle schools as deemed.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many pupil exclusions took place in each of the last three years in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Chorley. [146975]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The information available for the three most recent years is shown in the table:

Maintained primary, secondary and all special schools: number of permanent exclusions, 1999/2000 to 2001/02

	1999/2000		2000/01[1]		2001/02[1]	
	Number	Percentage[2]	Number	Percentage[2]	Number	Percentage[2]
Lancashire LEA						
Primary[3]	19	0.02	34	0.03	39	0.04
Secondary[3]	144	0.19	207	0.28	240	0.32
Special[4]	4	0.17	9	0.39	20	0.88
Total	167	0.09	250	0.14	299	0.17

	1999/2000		2000/01		2001/02	
	Number	Percentage[2]	Number	Percentage[2]	Number	Percentage[2]
Chorley constituency						
Primary[3]	1	0.01	0	0.00	7	0.08
Secondary[3]	8	0.11	13	0.18	17	0.23
Special[4]	0	0.00	1	0.51	2	0.01
Total	9	0.05	14	0.08	26	0.16

[1] The 2000/01 and 2001/02 figures shown in the table are based upon the Annual Schools census returns together with LEA level amendments reported by LEAs as part of the data checking process.
[2] Number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of school population.
[3] Includes middle schools as deemed.
[4] Includes maintained and non-maintained special schools.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census.

Individual Learning Accounts

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps have been taken to introduce a replacement scheme for individual learning accounts; when the replacement scheme will commence; and if he will make a statement. [149565]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In July 2003, we published the White Paper "21st Century Skills, Realising Our Potential" which sets out how we will meet the skills challenge. The reforms in that strategy provide the essential elements we previously sought to develop through Individual Learning Accounts (ILA). As the White Paper says at paragraph 4.31, we have decided not to introduce another stand-alone ILA scheme, separate from the mainstream support for adult learning.

The White Paper goes on to say:

"4.32 Instead, we have integrated those ILA elements that proved successful within the broader strategy, particularly through our proposals for a new entitlement to free learning at level 2 for those with few or no qualifications; improvements in learner support; broadening the range of training providers, so that we can bring within the scope of public funding those privateproviders who have something distinctive to offer and can meet the necessary quality standards; strengthening the range of first step and return to learn opportunities; improving information, advice and guidance for adults; and developing a Unique Learner Number."

Microsoft Licences

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many new licences for Microsoft products were purchased by schools in *(a)* 1999, *(b)* 2001 and *(c)* 2002; and what the cost was in each year of these purchases. [146854]

Mr. Charles Clarke: Information on the number of, and cost of, new licences for Microsoft products purchased by schools in 1999, 2001 and 2002 is not available because of the devolved nature of the purchasing of Microsoft products under IMS arrangements.

Information has been made available to Becta by Microsoft in respect of Microsoft's licensing sales to schools during the 2002/03 Microsoft financial year. This information is the subject of legally binding non-disclosure arrangements.

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills whether, under the terms of the memorandum between Microsoft and the British Educational Communications and Training Agency, schools will continue to get licences at 20 per cent. to 37 per cent. discounts if the total aggregate number of Microsoft licences held by schools in the United Kingdom falls. [146855]

Mr. Charles Clarke: The discount levels in the memorandum between Microsoft and the British Educational Communications and Training Agency are based on thresholds derived from the estimated number of licenses purchased annually by schools in England rather than on the total number of licenses held. The discount levels are calculated annually in arrears and therefore the discount levels which apply in Year 1 of the agreement relate to purchases already made, are at the maximum level, and are therefore absolutely guaranteed. The discount applicable in Year 2 will relate to the number of licenses actually purchased in Year 1. The discount in Year 3 relates to the actual purchases in Year 2.

The number of licences across the UK required to qualify for the maximum discount in Year 2 and Year 3 are also based on the same numerical threshold as Year 1. Therefore, no growth in the number of Microsoft licences purchased annually by schools is required to achieve the maximum discount levels.

As Becta has a UK wide remit, it has ensured that licence volumes from the Devolved Administrations, although not taken into account in deriving the threshold, can be taken into account in meeting it, thus providing a cost advantage to schools in the Devolved Administrations, and the increased possibility that schools in England will benefit from the highest discount levels.

In the event that the number of licenses purchased by schools across the UK does not fall below 96 per cent. of the number of licenses purchased by schools in England in the year prior to the introduction of the MOU, the maximum level of discount will continue to apply. If the total number of licences sold to schools in the UK in any year of the agreement (the annual sales) falls below 96 per cent. of the number of licences purchased in the year immediately preceding the agreement by schools in England (the base year), the 20 per cent. minimum discount will be reduced as follows:

if the annual sales fell to 75 per cent. of the base year sales, the minimum discount of 20 per cent. would be reduced to 75 per cent. of its previous value i.e. it would fall from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent; and

if the annual sales fell to 50 per cent. of the base year sales, the minimum discount would be reduced to 50 per cent. of its previous value i.e. it would drop from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent.

These two 'pro rata' minimum discount points at 15 per cent. and 10 per cent. were introduced to minimise the impact of any reductions in the purchasing by schools of Microsoft products.

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many licences for Microsoft products are held by state schools; and what the total cost of such licences to the schools is. [146856]

Mr. Charles Clarke: Microsoft has been supplying licences to schools for more than 20 years. Data on the number of licences held by state schools or their total cost are not available because of the devolved nature of purchasing under LMS arrangements.

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of new licences purchased in each of the last five years by schools are OEM type licences that come outside the agreement between the British Educational Communications and Training Agency and Microsoft. [146857]

Mr. Charles Clarke: Information on the percentage of new licences purchased in each of the last five years by schools that are Original Equipment (OEM) type licences, is not available because of devolved nature of the purchasing of Microsoft products under Local Management of Schools arrangements.

Microsoft has made information available to Becta in respect of Microsoft's (non-OEM) licensing sales to schools during the 2002–03 Microsoft financial year. This information is the subject of legally binding non-disclosure arrangements.

The Department's ICT in Schools survey provides information which can be used to estimate the year on year growth in the number of computers in schools. It is anticipated that the vast majority of these additional machines will require an OEM licence in respect of Microsoft Windows.

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will estimate the savings on software licences following the recent agreement between the British Educational Communications and Training Agency and Microsoft; and what percentage of school expenditure on Microsoft licences this represents in each of the next three years for schools. [146858]

Mr. Charles Clarke: Through aggregating demand for Microsoft Licensing, Becta has been able to identify estimated savings over the next three years of up to £46 million for schools in England. These potential savings apply to all schools in the maintained and independent sectors. Additional savings will accrue to schools in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Compared to April 2003 pricing, the reduction/savings in schools' spending attributable to this deal will be between 20 per cent. and 37 per cent. depending on the actual products purchased.

The estimate of savings for each of the next three years is:

Year 1—£13 million;

Year 2—£15 million; and

Year 3—£18 million.

Taking account of the likely mix of products purchased and the licensing programmes used, the overall percentage reduction in school spend on Microsoft licensing compared with spending levels as at April 2003 is estimated to be between 30 per cent. to 33 per cent.

The calculation of these savings was made possible as a result of information made available to Becta by Microsoft in respect of Microsoft's most recent financial year and under legally binding non-disclosure

arrangements. Procedures to monitor the actual level of savings achieved have been agreed by Becta and Microsoft.

Modern Apprenticeships

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many people under 22 are enrolled in or started modern apprenticeships in *(a)* 2002–03 and *(b)* 2003–04. [147436]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In the academic year 2002/03, there were 146,000 starts on modern apprenticeships by learners aged under 22, and at the end of this year, there were a total of 194,100 learners aged under 22 on modern apprenticeships. Figures for 2003/04 are not yet available. Figures for numbers of starts and numbers in learning as at the end of October 2003 will be published by the Learning and Skills Council in March.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of the total population are qualified to apprentice in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany. [147437]

Mr. Miliband: The percentage of the population qualified to apprentice in the UK is 13.6 per cent. Comparable figures from France and Germany are not available.

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many people were enrolled on apprenticeships in the United Kingdom in each year since 1995. [147440]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The numbers of learners in England enrolled on government supported Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (AMA) and Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) programmes at the end of July in each year since 1995 are shown in the table.

Thousand

Year	*AMA*	*FMA*	*Total MA*[1]
1995	2.1	n/a	2.1
1996	25.1	n/a	25.1
1997	87.5	n/a	87.5
1998	109.6	8.8	118.4
1999	123.8	41.4	165.2
2000	127.3	77.7	205.0
2001	115.0	87.0	202.0
2002	102.7	106.1	208.8
2003	99.5	119.1	218.5

[1] Totals may not equal sum of AMA and FMA due to rounding.

Note:

Comparable figures covering other types of apprenticeships are not available. The figures given cover England only. Modern apprenticeships in the other countries of the UK are a matter for the relevant devolved authorities.

Source:

1995 to 2000—TEC management information

2001 to 2003—LSC Individualised Learner Record

Modern Languages

Mr. David Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans his Department have to train specialist primary modern language teachers. [148376]

Mr. Miliband: In the current academic year, 406 people have been recruited to courses of initial teacher training for primary modern languages specialists provided by institutions in England. So far this year, there have been a further 34 recruits in primary modern languages to the Graduate Teacher Programme. In 2004–05, 580 college-based training places and 50 employment-based places will be available for primary modern languages.

School Exclusions

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many exclusions from English primary schools there were in the last three years; [148045]

(2) how many *(a)* short-term, *(b)* long- term and *(c)* permanent exclusions there were from English secondary schools for the last three years. [148104]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Information on fixed term exclusions is not yet available centrally. The Department has recently started to collect information from local education authorities on both fixed term and permanent exclusions on a termly basis. The first term's data are not yet available.

Information on the number of permanent exclusions in maintained primary and secondary schools is shown in the table.

Maintained primary and secondary schools[1] *number of permanent exclusions*

Academic years 1999/2000 to 2001/02
England

	Maintained Primary		*Maintained Secondary*	
	Number of permanent exclusions	*Percentage of the school population*[3]	*Number of permanent exclusions*	*Percentage of the school population*[3]
1999/2000	1,226	0.03	6,713	0.21
2000/01[2]	1,436	0.03	7,305	0.23
2001/02	1,451	0.03	7,741	0.24

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.

[2] Permanent exclusions for 2000/01 are estimated as a number of local education authorities have not confirmed the data for their schools.

[3] The number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of pupils in primary and secondary schools.

Source:

Annual Schools' Census

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children were excluded from school in each local education authority in each year since 1997. [148431]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The Information requested for permanent exclusions has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Information on fixed term exclusions is not yet available centrally. The Department has recently started

to collect information from local education authorities on both fixed term and permanent exclusions on a termly basis. The first term's data are not yet available.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children aged *(a)* between four and 11, *(b)* between 12 and 16 and *(c)* between 16 and 18 have been excluded from school in each London borough in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [148440]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 15 January 2004]:* The available information, shown in the table, relates to permanent exclusions from 1995/96 onward.

Maintained primary and secondary schools[1] and special schools[2]: Number of permanent exclusions by age group Academic years 1995/96 to 2001/02 London Local Education Authorities

	1995/96			1996/97		
	Pupils aged[3]					
	4–11	12–15	16–18	4–11	12–15	16–18
London	413	1,781	56	463	1,683	47
Inner London	174	622	15	199	559	13
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	11	39	1	20	49	2
Hackney	14	23	1	15	26	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	15	47	2	23	49	0
Haringey	8	39	2	5	42	2
Islington	16	59	0	13	31	2
Kensington and Chelsea	8	20	1	8	16	0
Lambeth	14	52	0	13	48	2
Lewisham	26	53	0	18	40	2
Newham	10	33	0	9	31	0
Southwark	22	66	1	26	67	0
Tower Hamlets	10	44	0	12	51	1
Wandsworth	11	86	6	27	64	0
Westminster	9	61	1	10	45	2
Outer London	239	1,159	41	264	1,124	34
Barking and Dagenham	18	46	3	21	66	2
Barnet	15	58	4	14	76	1
Bexley	10	49	2	21	42	0
Brent	12	101	1	13	80	6
Bromley	19	84	8	15	80	4
Croydon	20	98	1	30	108	0
Ealing	20	69	7	17	71	3
Enfield	8	81	3	7	87	8
Greenwich	22	68	0	19	58	2
Harrow	5	60	0	5	54	0
Havering	10	61	1	14	42	0
Hillingdon	12	55	4	13	55	0
Hounslow	17	66	5	24	69	4
Kingston-upon-Thames	6	30	2	7	28	0
Merton	7	42	0	5	16	1
Redbridge	4	28	0	4	28	2
Richmond-upon-Thames	7	45	0	8	51	0
Sutton	9	23	0	6	30	0
Waltham Forest	18	95	0	21	83	1

	1997/98			1998/99		
	Pupils aged[3]					
	4–11	12–15	16–18	4–11	12–15	16–18
London	422	1,553	52	348	1,402	32
Inner London	201	539	16	144	487	8
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	16	32	2	3	29	0
Hackney	22	24	0	15	21	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	17	35	0	4	41	3
Haringey	10	36	0	13	30	0
Islington	14	33	0	11	24	1
Kensington and Chelsea	7	31	0	8	21	0
Lambeth	17	45	0	13	27	0
Lewisham	28	47	2	18	46	1
Newham	15	38	1	15	39	0
Southwark	27	69	0	21	87	0
Tower Hamlets	6	43	0	2	30	0
Wandsworth	15	61	0	17	58	1
Westminster	7	45	11	4	34	2

	1997/98			1998/99		
	Pupils aged[3]					
	4–11	12–15	16–18	4–11	12–15	16–18
Outer London	221	1,014	36	204	915	24
Barking and Dagenham	11	35	1	15	23	1
Barnet	10	56	11	7	31	4
Bexley	16	54	2	20	40	1
Brent	11	80	6	9	68	0
Bromley	16	76	1	13	73	1
Croydon	29	79	0	25	106	0
Ealing	26	54	2	10	63	1
Enfield	16	66	5	8	61	7
Greenwich	13	47	1	20	57	2
Harrow	7	53	0	9	33	0
Havering	7	63	0	7	34	0
Hillingdon	5	53	0	10	56	0
Hounslow	13	54	4	9	54	4
Kingston-upon-Thames	2	25	2	2	23	0
Merton	7	29	0	5	19	0
Redbridge	5	30	0	8	33	1
Richmond-upon-Thames	2	52	0	7	38	0
Sutton	8	37	0	9	28	2
Waltham Forest	17	71	1	11	75	0

	1999/2000			2000/01[4]		
	Pupils aged[3]					
	4–11	12–15	16–18	4–11	12–15	16–18
London	251	1,021	17	298	1,145	5
Inner London	127	385	4	121	417	1
City of London	1	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	7	15	0	11	23	0
Hackney	9	22	0	11	23	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	4	17	0	9	31	0
Haringey	10	15	0	1	29	0
Islington	4	15	1	1	18	0
Kensington and Chelsea	7	17	0	5	12	0
Lambeth	12	19	0	13	28	0
Lewisham	26	47	2	20	63	0
Newham	10	23	0	10	26	0
Southwark	10	58	1	19	44	0
Tower Hamlets	2	29	0	6	40	0
Wandsworth	20	74	0	11	54	1
Westminster	5	34	0	4	25	0
Outer London	124	636	13	177	729	4
Barking and Dagenham	8	23	0	9	10	0
Barnet	9	48	0	7	48	0
Bexley	8	24	1	21	58	0
Brent	12	45	0	12	37	0
Bromley	4	21	3	10	50	1
Croydon	13	74	0	28	89	1
Ealing	3	22	2	5	28	0
Enfield	9	64	0	14	58	0
Greenwich	8	35	0	13	26	0
Harrow	5	34	0	11	57	0
Havering	2	32	0	4	28	0
Hillingdon	5	40	2	15	50	0
Hounslow	9	43	0	8	40	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	1	14	1	1	7	0
Merton	6	17	0	3	29	0
Redbridge	5	20	4	6	21	1
Richmond-upon-Thames	2	23	0	4	27	0
Sutton	0	19	0	2	22	0
Waltham Forest	15	38	0	6	43	0

	2001/02[3] Pupils aged[3]		
	4–11	12–15	16–18
London	291	1,154	11
Inner London	115	372	2
City of London	0	0	0
Camden	5	23	0
Hackney	15	18	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	4	32	1
Haringey	4	28	0
Islington	2	10	0
Kensington and Chelsea	4	9	0
Lambeth	11	27	0
Lewisham	21	45	0
Newham	13	37	0
Southwark	13	37	0
Tower Hamlets	2	36	0
Wandsworth	18	45	1
Westminster	3	24	0
Outer London	176	782	8
Barking and Dagenham	10	14	0
Barnet	4	49	1
Bexley	11	49	0
Brent	6	32	0
Bromley	9	74	2
Croydon	29	116	0
Ealing	13	51	0
Enfield	8	64	0
Greenwich	23	28	0
Harrow	6	62	0
Havering	3	37	5
Hillingdon	12	31	0
Hounslow	15	44	0
Kingston-upon-Thames	2	2	0
Merton	3	20	0
Redbridge	7	25	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	6	25	0
Sutton	5	30	0
Waltham Forest	3	32	0

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.
[2] Includes maintained and non-maintained special schools.
[3] Age as at 31 August at start of reference year.
[4] Estimates have been made for 2000/01 and 2001/02 because the exclusion data are known to be incomplete.
Source:
Annual Schools' Census

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what records the Government keeps on the causes for school exclusions; and whether it lists them by category. [148095]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: My Department started to collect data on the reasons for exclusions from summer term 2003. The first term's data are not yet available.

Pupil/Teacher Ratios

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the pupil/teacher ratio was for each local education authority for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each year since 1997. [148429]

Mr. Ivan Lewis *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The information requested has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

School Admissions

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many pupils entered primary and secondary schools in each local education authority for the most recent year for which information is available; how many appeals against admissions there were; and what proportion of appeals were *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful. [149183]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The latest available information has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

School Funding

Mr. Hoban: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what discussions he has had with the Cabinet Office's strategy and delivery units on changes to the way funding may be allocated to schools; what work he has undertaken to review the basis of distributing funds directly to schools; and if he will place copies of the papers in the Library. [147146]

Mr. Miliband *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* On 29 October the Secretary of State announced the arrangements for school funding in 2004–05 and 2005–06. Every school is guaranteed a minimum increase in funding—4 per cent. in 2004–05—and every LEA will receive at least a 5 per cent. funding increase that year. We expect LEAs to pass on funding increases to schools. We will continue to provide some direct grants from the Government to schools, in particular the Standards Fund, and allow schools to spend these funds more flexibly to meet their needs. These measures are designed to deliver stability and certainty for schools; this is our priority.

The Government continues to keep funding arrangements under review in consultation with other departments.

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which local education authorities have made representations to ministers in his Department about school funding since October 2003. [148048]

Mr. Charles Clarke: We have received a wide range of representations from local education authorities and I, my ministerial colleagues and my officials have had discussions with many authorities both individually and collectively. The position on school funding was set out to the House on 29 October.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills at what level Government funding per pupil will be in each of the next 10 years. [148561]

Mr. Miliband: Funding per pupil is set to rise by £1,000 in real terms, from £2,810 in 1997 to £3,600 in 2003–04 to £3,850 in 2006.

The level for 2006–07 and beyond will be determined by the outcome of future Spending Reviews.

School Trips

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills pursuant to his answer of 8 January, *Official Report*, column 473W, on school trips, if he will assess the average annual costs to schools of covering the costs for pupils whose parents are unable to contribute to the costs of school trips; and if he will reimburse such costs to schools whose pupil profile has an above average number of children from families in receipt of state benefit. [149429]

Mr. Charles Clarke: There are no plans to assess either the average annual costs to schools of covering the cost of school trips for parents unable to make a contribution, or for the Department to reimburse these costs.

School-leavers (Qualifications)

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of the total population left school without basic school leaving qualifications in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany. [147438]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The exact information requested is not available. The proportion of the population in each country that had failed to achieve qualifications at the level defined by the OECD as "upper secondary" by the ages shown is, however, as follows:

	Age Group				
	25–64	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55–64*
France	36	22	33	42	54
Germany	17	15	14	17	24
UK	37	32	35	39	45

Source:
Education at a Glance, 2003, OECD (derived from Table A1.2, page 41)

"Upper secondary" is defined in the UK context as attaining five GCSEs at grades A*-C or an equivalent vocational qualification (for example, a GNVQ at foundation or intermediate level).

Schools Voluntary Assistance Scheme

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what progress has been made with his plans to encourage retired professionals to assist in schools on a voluntary basis; and what programmes are in place in the North East. [148319]

Mr. Miliband: Working through some of our national partners and contractors, such as the NCSL, TTA and Capita, we have encouraged the increased use of retired professionals, including teachers, with our plans for remodelling the school workforce and promoting 'Keeping in Touch' and 'Return to Teach' programmes. It is however up to local authorities and schools to determine their local needs for voluntary support staff. The Department does not collect centrally information about any such local programmes.

More specifically, for those teachers who retired on ill-health grounds from the Teachers' Pension Scheme, regulations came into effect on 1 January 2004 (The Education Health Standards England Regulations 2003) which will enable such former teachers to be re-employed, or work on a voluntary basis, in the education sector in a non-teaching capacity.

Departmental Circulars

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will list the circular documents that were sent by his Department to *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools between (i) 1 September 2002 and 31 August 2003 and (ii) 1 January and 31 December 2003; how many were on teacher workload; and how many pages each document contained. [148559]

Mr. Miliband: The following pages show the documents that were sent in the period 1 September 2002 and 31 August 2003 to *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools. In total 37 documents were sent to all primary schools and 41 documents were sent to all secondary schools. On teacher workload one document was sent to all primary schools and all secondary schools in the period 1 September 2002 and 31 August 2003. This document contained 32 pages.

The following pages also show the documents that were sent in the period 1 September 2003 and 31 December 2003 to *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools. In total 14 documents were sent to all primary schools and 20 documents were sent to all secondary schools. On teacher workload two documents were sent to all primary schools and secondary schools in this period. The total number of pages contained in these documents were three.

Where a document has been sent to all primary and all secondary schools it will appear in the totals for both primary and secondary above. Details of each document and how many pages each contained have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many circular e-mails were sent by his Department to *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools between (i) 1 September 2002 and 31 August 2003 and (ii) 1 January and 31 December 2003. [148560]

Mr. Miliband: During the period 1 September 2002 to 31 August 2003, three emails were sent to all primary schools and one to all secondary schools. During the period 1 September 2003 to 31 December 2003, five emails were sent to all primary schools and three to all secondary schools.

Skills Shortages

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the resources required to address skills shortages in former coalfield areas. [147479]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: This Department recognises the disparity between levels of necessary skills in particularly disadvantaged areas such as former coalfield areas and more affluent areas. It is addressing these issues through policies and targeted measures that focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, tackling social exclusion and providing support to families and learners.

"The Skills Strategy", published in July 2003, announced new resources for:

creating a new entitlement to free learning for anyone without a good foundation of employability skills to get the training they need to achieve such a qualification (Level 2);

providing targeted support for higher level skills at technician, higher craft or associate professional level. This support will be focused on those who are developing their skills and qualifications to Level 3, in priority areas to meet sectoral and regional skill needs. The support will be provided through the new regional skills partnerships, and planned and funded by the local Learning and Skills Councils;

piloting the delivery of a new learning grant for adults in further education. This will be modelled on the existing education maintenance allowance for 16 to 19-year-olds. It will be aimed at adults studying full-time for their first full Level 2 qualification, and young adults studying full-time for their first full Level 3 qualification. One of the areas it is being piloted in, from September, is South Yorkshire;

safeguarding the provision in each local area of a wide range of learning for adults, for culture, leisure, community and personal fulfilment purposes. While giving priority to better work-related skills training, each local Learning and Skills Council will have funds to work with others to support that range of learning, including learning for pensioners;

providing better information, advice and guidance on skills, training and qualifications, so that people know what is available, what the benefits are, and where to go. To achieve this, we will combine the network of local advice partnerships with the national advice helpline provided by Ufi/learndirect; and

Learning Communities to tackle low adult aspiration and skills and intergenerational deprivation by making a specific but strong connection between the development of a communities skills base and the contribution that it can make to meeting the regional skills needs and priorities expressed by the FRESA. The goal is not just social improvement, vital though this is. Learning Communities will add value by raising regional prosperity and productivity through raising skills because this, in itself, is a powerful way of addressing social disadvantage.

This Department also recognises the importance of coordinating its policies effectively to make an impact in deprived areas and is working with the LSC, RDA, local authorities and Coalfields organisations such as the Coalfield Communities Campaign (CCC) to achieve effective targeting and cohesion.

We work with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), both nationally and with each of its 47 local offices, to ensure that education, skills and employment policies all come together sensibly in communities. We have ensured that local LSCs have the flexibility to allocate their resources where they are most needed so that they can make maximum impact in disadvantaged communities, and can draw on funding from elsewhere e.g. European Social Funding (ESF).

The nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) help ensure, for example, that their Regeneration and Skills Development Funds are targeted to impact on Neighbourhood Renewal areas and can set aside specific funds to address basic skills needs in their regions.

Sure Start

Jeff Ennis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many Sure Start schemes are operating in England; and how many of these are community-led schemes. [145467]

Margaret Hodge: All 524 planned Sure Start local programmes are now operating, serving many of the most disadvantaged communities in England. All Sure Start programmes are 'community-led' through a partnership (made up of parents, community groups, and local representatives of voluntary and statutory organisations providing services to the families in the area) that designs the programme after consultation with families and workers in the area so that services reflect the needs of the community. These partnerships, in the main, have no legal status and are not incorporated bodies. One of the partner organisations must act as the 'accountable body' and take the legal responsibility for receiving the grant on behalf of the partnership. 86 programmes (16 per cent.) have non-statutory organisations as their accountable body, and of these, 16 (3 per cent.) are community groups or partnerships who have taken legal status for the purpose of running the programme.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of GCSE-equivalent qualifications were vocational in each year since 1997. [147439]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The percentage of pupils that achieved 5+ grades A*-C at GCSE/GNVQ with the help of vocational (GNVQ) qualifications since 1997 are shown in the table.

Academic year	*Percentage of pupils who achieved 5+ A*-C at GCSE/GNVQ with the help of vocational qualifications*
1996/97	0.2
1997/98	0.4
1998/99	0.6
1999/2000	0.8
2000/01	1.2
2001/02	2.7
2002/03	5.6

WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefits

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to reduce delays in processing council tax benefit claims. [148233]

Mr. Pond: Local authorities generally process council tax benefit claims alongside claims for housing benefit. We have already put in place a comprehensive programme of reforms to the administration of both these benefits; our immediate priority is to reduce delays in processing times and we are making good progress.

As part of the 2002 Spending Review, the Department invested £200 million over three years in a standards fund to help local authorities fund improvements in the service. The priority for the first year of funding was improvement in the speed and accuracy of claims processing and the prevention and recovery of overpayments.

The need for pensioners to make renewal claims for council tax benefit was abolished in October 2003 and renewal claims for working age claimants will be abolished from April 2004. Previously claims for council tax benefit were made for a set period of up to 60 weeks.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to relax restrictions on council tax benefit eligibility for pensioners who have modest savings; and if he will make a statement. [148239]

Mr. Pond: With the introduction of pension credit on 6 October 2003, the upper capital limit of £16,000 has been abolished for those pensioners who receive the pension credit guarantee. The more generous income and savings rules in pension credit also apply to both housing benefit and council tax benefit. The rate at which money is deducted from benefit in respect of capital over £6,000 has also been halved, from £1 in every £250 to £1 in every £500. Around 1.9 million households stand to get more help, or help for the first time, with their council tax as a result of the introduction of pension credit.

Additionally, we are abolishing the council tax benefit restriction from 1 April 2004; this currently restricts the maximum amount of council tax benefit for people living in properties in council tax bands F, G or H to the maximum amount payable for a band E property. Pensioners will, of course, be among those people who benefit from this change.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to give the pension service overall responsibility for raising the take-up of council tax benefit in partnership with organisations working directly with pensioners; and if he will make a statement. [148240]

Mr. Pond: Promoting the take-up of council tax benefit is the statutory duty of local authorities. However we are keen to ensure that all pensioners entitled to help with their council tax bills are claiming this. In particular, we want to ensure that the 1.9 million pensioners who gain, or gain more, council tax benefit on the introduction of pension credit get the extra help to which they are entitled.

We are therefore actively pursuing ways of supporting local authorities in their duty to promote awareness of council tax benefit. Many authorities already have well developed take up strategies and we want to support these, and other authorities, to ensure that more pensioners on low income are receiving the help to which they are entitled.

The pension service are inviting claims for council tax benefit when an application for pension credit is made, and we recently introduced a shortened claim form for pensioners applying for the benefit to make their claim easier. Everyone who calls the pension credit application line and wishes to apply for housing/council tax benefit is issued with a form.

The local service is also working with partner organisations, including local authorities, to help reach the most vulnerable pensioners. During visits to pensioners in the local community or their homes advice on entitlement is provided and help offered to complete application forms.

The Third Age Programme is also joining up existing service providers to offer a "whole person" service to pensioners. Joint teams (consisting of both local authority and pension service staff) are already up and running in nine local authority areas in the southwest and plan to roll these teams out nationally over the next two years.

The Third Age Programme are also working with the voluntary sector to help reinforce messages about take-up and funding has been provided to support innovative pilots to increase the take-up of benefits including council tax benefit.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to what extent, and for what reason he has agreed to delegate decisions over the level of housing benefit or council tax benefit to the Scottish Executive. [149645]

Mr. Pond: Although housing policy and local government finance are areas of devolved responsibility that interact closely with housing benefit and council tax benefit, responsibility for decisions over the level of housing benefit and council tax benefit remains with the UK Government at Westminster.

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many staff responsible for detection of benefit fraud have been employed by his Department in each year since 1997, broken down by region; and if he will make a statement. [147817]

Mr. Pond: The overall aim of the Department's anti-fraud strategy is to have a benefit system that is secure from first claim to final payment. The implementation of this strategy means than an anti-fraud focus is integral to the work of all staff in the Department, as is dealing with the wider agenda of error and incorrectness in benefit payments.

The information currently available suggests that around 5,000 staff are employed nationally at any one time by the Department and its agencies in work to investigate suspicions of fraud.

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he expects to produce United Kingdom estimates of housing benefit fraud and error for 2002–03. [147827]

Mr. Pond: For Great Britain, we published "Fraud and Error in Housing Benefit, April 2002 to March 2003" on 11 December 2003; a copy will be placed in the Library. Social security matters in Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have been convicted of benefit fraud twice within three years since 1997; how many of these have had their benefit *(a)* reduced and *(b)* withdrawn; and if he will make a statement. [148242]

Mr. Pond: Records of second convictions before 'Two Strikes' legislation came into effect on 1 April 2002 are not available. This provision cannot be applied retrospectively and applies only to people who have committed, and then been convicted of, two separate benefit offences after that date.

To date, 23 people have been convicted of benefit fraud against the Department on two or more occasions. Sanctions have been applied to 11 of these cases, five of which have had their benefit reduced, and a further six have had their benefit withdrawn. A further 10 individuals are not currently in receipt of benefit. Additionally, a further two individuals are due to have their benefits withdrawn after the appeal period allowed has lapsed.

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners were in receipt of *(a)* full and *(b)* partial council tax benefit in Huntingdon in each of the last three financial years. [146446]

Mr. Pond: The information is not available. At August 2003, there were 3,700 people aged 60 or over receiving Council Tax Benefit in Huntingdonshire, of which 2,100 people were also in receipt of Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance (income-based).

Notes:
1. Data refer to benefit units, which may be a single person or a couple.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred and expressed in thousands.
3. Totals exclude any Second Adult Rebate cases.
4. Information is available for August 2003 only.

Source:
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit quarterly 100 per cent. count.

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the uptake of council tax benefit in Wirral South. [147841]

Mr. Pond: At August 2003, there were 33,900 people receiving council tax benefit (CTB) in the area covered by Wirral local authority.

Estimates of CTB take-up in Wirral South are not available. Statistics on the take-up of income-related benefits are available on a national basis only, and are published in the DWP report entitled "Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-up"; copies of the publication series can be found in the Library.

I announced a campaign to further support local authorities in their statutory duty to promote take-up of council tax benefit on 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 25WS.

Notes:
1. The data refers to benefit units, which may be a single person or a couple.
2. The figure is rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. Council tax benefit totals exclude any Second Adult Rebate cases.

Source:
Housing benefit and council tax benefit management information system, quarterly 100 per cent. caseload stock-count.

Care Direct

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the Care Direct pilots. [149789]

Malcolm Wicks: The six Care Direct pilots taking place in the south west will conclude at the end of March 2004. We are in the early stages of evaluating these pilots. This research is being done by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (University of Kent) and their report will inform a Lessons Learned document to be produced in April 2004.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people claimed disability living allowance for the financial years *(a)* 2001–02 and *(b)* 2002–03, broken down by disability living allowance band. [147333]

Maria Eagle: People claim for disability living allowance as a whole rather than for any particular part of it. Figures for the total number of claims and the number of awards, broken down by particular components, are shown in the following table.

Number of new disability living allowance claims and awards each year

Thousand

	2002–03	*2001–02*
Number of claims[1]	407.8	433.3
All awards[2]	252.8	264.8
Higher Rate Care and Higher Mobility	36.7	38.0
Higher Rate Care Lower Rate Mobility	14.4	15.8
Higher Rate Care only	11.9	12.4
Middle Rate Care and Higher Rate Mobility	24.7	26.8
Middle Rate Care and Lower Rate Mobility	26.8	28.9
Middle Rate Care only	20.6	20.4
Lower Rate Care and Higher Rate Mobility	29.9	29.1
Lower Rate Care and Lower Rate Mobility	14.6	15.0
Lower Rate Care only	34.5	37.6
Higher Rate Mobility	29.1	31.0
Lower Rate Mobility	9.6	9.8

Notes:
The figures for the number of claims and the number of awards for each year are drawn from different sources and are not comparable.
Figures are in thousands and rounded to the nearest hundred.
A small number of people have more than one award in the year. These people are counted more than once as the table shows awards.

Source:
1. 100 per cent. MIS data. Figures are for financial years
2. IAD Information Centre, 5 per cent. sample. The figures are for the number of awards at May and are closest to the financial years.

John Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department is taking to reduce the complexity of the application process for disability living allowance. [148493]

Maria Eagle: The Disability and Carers Service acknowledges that the claiming process for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) needs to be simplified and has been running a number of initiatives designed to improve the service to customers.

A shorter DLA postal claim form based around the revised Attendance Allowance (AA) claim form introduced nationally on 6 October 2003 is being tested. The new DLA postal form has 23 pages and is considerably shorter than the existing claim form. The results from the first three full months of testing are currently being collated and a revised claim form is expected to be produced later this year.

Internet based claim forms for DLA and AA are also under development following the E claim form for Carers Allowance that was launched in December 2003. These should also be available later this year.

Since November 2002, a new interactive claiming process has been trialled in Glasgow Disability Benefits Centre. Customers who request a claim form by telephone are directed to a customer claim advisor who asks some preliminary questions to establish the broad basis of the claim. A tailored claim form is then produced by the computer system that supports the process and forwarded to the customer for completion.

The form generated is a maximum of 18 pages, considerably shorter than the existing 47 page form. The results of this trial and the clerical claim form tests will inform the further modernisation of the processing of Disability Benefits.

Incapacity Benefit Appeals

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in how many incapacity benefit appeal cases processed by the social security office in Dundee in the last year it has taken more than two months to reach a decision on whether to challenge appeal tribunal decisions; and what percentage of the total cases dealt with in that period this represents. [148747]

Maria Eagle: During 2003 there were three cases dealt with by Dundee incapacity benefit section that took more than two months to decide whether to challenge the appeal tribunal decision. This represents 0.45 per cent. of the total cases dealt with by the section in 2003.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to re-consider the upper limit on the Independent Living Fund; and what implications this has for clients in need of highly complex care packages. [148273]

Maria Eagle: Following the recommendations of the Quinquennial Review of the Independent Living Funds in December 2001 it was agreed that the upper limit should be reviewed by the trustees of the fund every two years. In April 2002 the limit was raised from £625 to £665 per week and the trustees are currently again reviewing the limit.

Local authorities have primary responsibility for community care provision and the Independent Living Funds supplement that role. Irrespective of the amount of the upper limit of Independent Living Funds assistance, local authorities can fund care for disabled people with high cost support packages.

Jobcentre Plus

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the dismissal of 350 temporary staff by Jobcentre Plus London Region in February and March, with particular reference to the number who were re-employed by Jobcentre Plus within 13 weeks of their dismissal on *(a)* temporary contracts and *(b)* permanent contracts; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for their dismissal. [145351]

Mr. Browne: The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, David Anderson. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from David Anderson to Mr. Andrew Dismore, dated 21 January 2004:

As Jobcentre Plus is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question concerning re-employment of temporary staff within 13 weeks in London whose contracts of employment ended in February and March 2003. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Of the 350 staff on temporary contracts who left employment with Jobcentre Plus during February and March 2003, two people were re-employed within 13 weeks of the end of their temporary contract, one on a permanent contract and one on a new temporary contract.

Jobcentre Plus employs temporary staff specifically to fill short-term needs. This may be for a variety of reasons, for example to help manage peaks of work or to facilitate the release of staff for training during the rollout of the integrated Jobcentre Plus service. Any temporary employees ending their employment in February/ March 03 were released as their contracts had ended and the services/roles for which they were engaged had also finished.

While there will be an on-going need to employ a small percentage of temporary staff for the reasons I have set out above, it remains the intention in London to reduce reliance on temporary employees and to recruit and maintain a stable permanent workforce.

I hope this is helpful and clarifies matters.

Low-income Families

Andy King: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the equivalent thresholds to the absolute low income threshold of £210 per week for a couple with one child under 16 published in Measuring Child Poverty, of December 2003 are for *(a)* a couple with two children, *(b)* a couple with three children, *(c)* a couple with four children, *(d)* a lone parent with two children, *(e)* a lone parent with three children and *(f)* a lone parent with four children. [147423]

Mr. Pond: To measure whether the poorest families are seeing their incomes rise in real terms, we will monitor the number of children living in families with incomes below a particular threshold, which is adjusted for inflation. The level for a couple with one child under 14 published in Measuring Child Poverty is fixed as equal to our absolute low income threshold for the baseline year of 1998–99 expressed in today's prices.

Equivalent information for different family types is in the table.

Number of children under 14	*£ per week*
Lone parents	
1	153
2	188
3	223
4	259
Couples	
1	212
2	247
3	282
4	317

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest £1.
2. The £210 figure published in "Measuring child poverty" was rounded to the nearest £10. The amount for a couple with one child is presented here as £212, is rounded to the nearest £1 to allow clearer comparison to other family types.
3. Figures were arrived at using the current prices (mid year 2003–04) cash equivalent for these family types of the 1998–99 60 per cent. median income level, before housing costs and using the OECD Modified equalisation scale.

New Deal

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many people have gained sustained, unsubsidised employment on *(a)* their first time, *(b)* their second time and *(c)* their third or more

time on the New Deal for Young People programme; what these figures represent as a proportion of the total number gaining sustained unsubsidised employment on the programme; and if he will make a statement; [148243]

(2) how many people have gained sustained unsubsidised employment on *(a)* their first time, *(b)* their second time and *(c)* their third or more time on the New Deal 25plus programme; what these figures represent as a proportion of the total number gaining sustained unsubsidised employment on the programme; and if he will make a statement. [148244]

Mr. Browne: The information is in the table.

Number of times on the programme	*People into sustained[1], unsubsidised employment*	
	Number	*Percentage*
New Deal for Young People		
Once	298,550	80.5
Twice	60,450	16.3
Three or more times	12,090	3.3
New Deal 25 plus		
Once	87,110	81.6
Twice	15,370	14.4
Three or more times	4,340	4.1

Note:
1. Employment is classed as sustained if no claim for Jobseeker's Allowance is made within 13 weeks.
2. Figures are to the end of September 2003.
3. Percentages do not sum to exactly 100 per cent due to rounding.
Source:
DWP Information and Analysis Directorate

The New Deals have been successful in helping nearly one million people into work including more than 460,000 people thorough New Deal for Young People and nearly 165,000 people through New Deal 25 Plus.

In a dynamic labour market, it is inevitable that some people will re-experience unemployment after leaving New Deal, however, the skills and experience they acquire after finding work through the programme will make it easier for them to find employment in the future.

We have also introduced other measures to help people facing additional barriers to work, for example the StepUP pilots, which build on the New Deal for Young People and New Deal 25 plus by providing transitional jobs for those who have not secured sustained employment through New Deal.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have benefited from the New Deal in Chorley since 1998. [149167]

Mr. Browne: The New Deals have been successful in helping nearly 1 million people into work, including 1,410 people in the Chorley constituency. Information on numbers helped into work by each New Deal programme is in the table.

Programme[1]	*People gaining a job*
New Deal for Young People	540
New Deal 25 plus	180
New Deal for Lone Parents	480
New Deal 50 plus[2]	210

Note:
1. All figures are up to the end of September 2003 apart from New Deal 50 plus which is up to the end of March 2003.
2. People in receipt of the New Deal 50 plus Employment Credit.
3. Information on the other New Deals is not available broken down by constituency.
Source:
DWP Information and Analysis Directorate

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the implications of recent and proposed EU Directives on funding levels in occupational pension schemes for pension provision in the United Kingdom. [149172]

Malcolm Wicks: The impact of all Directives relevant to occupational pensions are assessed with regard to the impact on business including any costs they may impose, although additional costs may not directly impact on the funding of a scheme. Such assessments are set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessments that are published with the legislative measures which implement the requirements of these Directives.

The Directive on the Activities and Supervision of Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provisions contains Articles which directly relate to funding and we have recently consulted on its implementation in the UK. We are currently considering those consultation responses but believe our proposed reforms of funding arrangements, as set out in 'Action on occupational pensions' (Cm5835) are broadly compatible with the requirements of the Directive.

Direct Payment

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in the Angus constituency have changed their method of receiving payment of their retirement pension from pension book to direct payment into bank account in each of the last six months. [147462]

Mr. Pond: The information is not available in the format requested. However, information available is supplied in the table. The table shows the breakdown of pensioners (women aged 60 and over, men aged 65 and over) in the Angus constituency that have changed their state pension method of payment from pension book to direct payment into a bank account in the last six months broken down into periods available.

More pensioners in the Angus constituency are now paid directly into an account than by Order Book.

Number of pensioners changing their state pension method of payment from pension book to direct payment into an account

	Number
14 June-26 July 2003	73
26 July-6 September 2003	151
6 September-25 October 2003	177
25 October-29 November 2003	250
Total	651

Note:
An account includes bank, building society or Post Office card account
Source:
DWP Information Centre, Information & Analysis Directorate (100 per cent. sample).

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in the Angus constituency received their retirement pension by means of *(a)* pension book and *(b)* direct payment into a bank account as at 1 January. [147463]

Mr. Pond: The information is not available for the date requested.

However, the table shows the breakdown of pensioners (women aged 60 and over, men aged 65 and over) in the Angus constituency that received their state pension by means of pension book and direct payment into a bank account, at 29 November 2003, which is most recent data available:

More pensioners in the Angus constituency are now paid directly into an account than by order book.

Method of payment	*Number of pensioners*
Pension book	5,751
Direct payment into an account	8,315
Total	14,066

Note:
An account includes bank, building society or Post Office card account
Source:
DWP Information Centre, Information & Analysis Directorate (100 per cent. sample).

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to how many pension and benefit claimants his Department will write to invite them to move to direct payment. [149181]

Mr. Pond: We are in the process of issuing approximately 14.25 million invitations for pension and benefit customers to move to direct payment. We are making good progress and have so far issued almost 60 per cent. of these invitations.

Key figures on the progress of conversion to direct payment are available in the Library updated every four weeks.

Mr. Alan Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many *(a)* working age benefits, *(b)* disability and carers' benefit, *(c)* retirement pension, *(d)* child benefit and *(e)* war pensions claimants are paid by (i) direct payment into a bank or building society account, (ii) direct payment into a post office card account, (iii) order book and (iv) other methods. [145975]

Mr. Pond *[holding answer 6 January 2004]:* The figures in the table have been compiled from data available on 29 November 2003.

Benefit	*Accounts paid by Direct Payment into a bank or building society account*	*Accounts paid by Direct Payment into a Card Account at the Post Office*	*Accounts paid by order book*	*Accounts paid by other methods*
Working age benefits				
Jobseeker's allowance (JSA)	373,931	17,891	0	377,609
Income support (IS)	648,895	39,515	1,454,416	37,222
Incapacity benefit (IB)	583,742	15,931	674,821	11,743
Severe disablement allowance (SDA)	43,045	1,035	70,296	5,432
Industrial injuries (II)	152,837	9,073	277,035	0
Widow's benefit (WB)	86,549	1,137	77,591	270
Bereavement benefit (BB)	32,807	91	11,116	13
Working age benefits total	1,921,806	84,673	2,565,276	432,289
Disability and Carer Benefits Directorate				
Disability living allowance (DLA)	1,052,318	14,992	1,029,434	87
Attendance allowance (AA)	356,014	1,780	169,633	107
Carer's allowance (CA)	111,001	405	298,086	0
Disability and carer benefits directorate total	1,519,333	17,177	1,497,153	194
Pensioners				
State pension	[illegible]649	68,665	4,025,027	45,527
Pension credit	[illegible]249	4,754	1,478,766	10,242
Pensioners total	[illegible]898	73,419	5,503,793	55,769
Grand total	[illegible]037	175,269	9,566,221	488,252

Notes:
1. Figures refer to a snapshot of live accounts in payment on the following dates:
Income support—28 November 2003
Jobseeker's allowance—28 November 2003
Industrial injuries—21 November 2003
Pensions (state pension, incapacity benefit, severe disablement allowance, widow's benefit, bereavement benefit)—29 November 2003
Attendance allowance—15 November 2003
Disability living allowance—15 November 2003
Carer's allowance—30 June 2003
Pension credit—14 November 2003 (rated to end November)
Carer's allowance—30 June 2003
Pension credit—14 November 2003 (rated to end November)
2. Please note this is payload and not caseload therefore if a claimant is receiving more than one benefit e.g. pension credit (PC) and state pension (SP) but only receives one combined payment through the PC system they will only be shown as having a pension credit account and not a SP account.
3. Figures quoted are for GB only.

4. The Post Office Card Account has only been available since 1 April 2003. The numbers of customers being paid into a Post Office card account are expected to increase in the coming months as 20 week order books begin to expire and customers begin to receive payment direct into their card accounts.
5. Many bank and Building Society accounts allow access to cash at Post Offices, for benefits and pension customers who wish to collect their payment this way.
Source:
DWP Information Centre, Information & Analysis Directorate (100 per cent. sample).

War pensions and child benefit accounts are not included in the reply because they are now the responsibility of Ministry of Defence and Inland Revenue respectively.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pension and benefit claimants who were sent letters inviting them to move to direct payment have indicated that they cannot open or operate a bank account or Post Office card account; and what assessment his Department has made of the number of people who will use the exceptions service method of payment. [146746]

Mr. Pond: Research has shown that 87 per cent. of all our customers and 90 per cent. of pensioners already have an account suitable for Direct Payment.

Almost three and a half million customers have provided their bank account details, and around two million have requested a Post Office card account. However information on the number of customers replying that they could not specifically open or operate a bank or Post Office card account is not available in this format.

We will be further contacting all customers who continue to be paid by order book. Any customers, who cannot open or operate a bank account before order books are no longer available in 2005, will be paid by another method. In the meantime they will continue to receive their payments by order book.

We have always recognised that there will be a small number of people who we cannot pay directly into an account. Our plan is to design an exceptions method of payment to properly meet the needs of these customers. Detailed arrangements for this method of payment are not finalised yet, but it is likely that it will be a cheque-based solution. Payment outlets will include Post Office branches.

The move to Direct Payment is progressing well. Key figures on the progress of conversion to Direct Payment are available in the Library updated every four weeks.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what advice he is offering to local authority social services departments on direct payments with a view to encouraging each authority to adopt a clear strategy on take-up. [148272]

Mr. Pond: We have discussed the move to direct payment widely with customer representative groups including Local Government Association representatives.

The Department's primary objective continues to be to pay benefit and pensions direct into the chosen account of every customer who is able to manage their own affairs, or into a third party account nominated by the customer.

Customers are supplied directly with information that clearly sets out their account options and enables them to decide which account is right for them.

Pension Credit

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many calls to the Pension Credit Helpline since April were completed with a successful claim of the Pension Credit. [146040]

Malcolm Wicks: Between 7 April and 31 December 2003 the Pension Credit application line received approximately 1.84 million calls. By 31 December approximately 590,000 application forms had been returned to Pension Centres since the start of the campaign and approximately 377,000 had already been successful. Not all applications for Pension Credit originate from a call to the application line. Customers can obtain paper application forms in a number of ways, for example by returning a tear-off slip or through one of the external organisations with whom we are working at local level.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in the Buckingham constituency *(a)* have applied for, *(b)* are eligible for and *(c)* have received the pension credit in 2003. [149189]

Malcolm Wicks: At 31 December 2003 there were 1,666 pensioner households (2,007 individuals) in the Buckingham constituency receiving pension credit. Information on the number of people who have applied for or are eligible for pension credit is not available in respect of individual constituencies. However, we estimate that approximately 350,000 pensioner households in the South East region are eligible for pension credit.

Pensioners (Hemsworth)

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Hemsworth constituency receive benefits at the Post Office. [145918]

Mr. Pond: The number of Pensioners in the Hemsworth constituency receiving at least one benefit which can be collected at the Post Office is 10,911. This information has been compiled from data available on 29 November 2003.

War Pensions accounts are not included in this reply as they are now the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence.

Poverty

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on poverty levels in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the UK in the last five years. [145682]

Mr. Pond: Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multi-dimensional issues, affecting many aspects of peoples' lives—including their living standards, health, housing, the quality of their environment and not just low

income. The fifth annual 'Opportunity for all' report (Cm 5956) sets out the Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion and presents information on the many different indicators used to measure progress against this strategy.

The Scottish Executive also publish their own annual report on poverty and social exclusion. The latest of which, 'Social Justice . . . a Scotland where everyone matters' sets out their long term strategy for tackling poverty in Scotland.

Specific information regarding low income for Great Britain is available in 'Households Below Average Income 1994–95—2001–02'.

All publications listed are available in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Love: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications were made by lone parents to the Social Fund in England in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what proportion of those applications were successful. [144485]

Mr. Pond: The available information is in the table.

Number of decisions made on Social Fund applications from lone parents in England for December 2002 to November 2003

Application type	*Decisions*	*Proportion of decisions which were successful (per cent.)*
Community Care Grant	117,900	43.7
Budgeting Loan	572,100	79.8
Crisis Loan	185,400	79.3
Sure Start Maternity Grant	63,600	89.3
Funeral Payment	4,200	Not available

Notes:

1. Data are not available on the total number of applications made by lone parents.

2. Data refer to initial decisions only and do not include review decisions or awards made after review.

3. The numbers of decisions have been rounded to the nearest 100 and the proportions of decisions which were successful to the nearest 0.1 per cent.

Source:

Social Fund Policy, Budget and Management Information System.

Social Housing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what additional expenditure resulting from large scale voluntary transfers and the formation of arm's length management organisations for council housing has been incurred on housing benefit previously paid out of housing revenue accounts on a cumulative basis in each year since 1997. [147224]

Mr. Pond: The information is not available. To determine such a figure would require detailed assumptions about the rents each authority might theoretically have charged had it retained the stock. However, the potential impact on housing benefit where stock is transferred to registered social landlords is considered as part of the overall value-for-money assessment of transfers.

Stock managed by an arms length management organisation (ALMO) remains owned by the council and subject to national rent restructuring policy. The formation of an ALMO does not therefore affect rent levels or housing benefit entitlement.

Third Age Service

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the progress his Department have made in respect of the Third Age Service. [149788]

Malcolm Wicks: The Department for Work and Pensions is in the early stages of developing a Third Age Service which is seen as a network of service providers providing improved access to a range of more integrated services. In this respect, we are working with partners, in particular the Partnerships Against Poverty Group and the Third Age Working Group which DWP chair and which include representatives from Age Concern, Help the Aged, Better Government for Older people and other key stakeholders.

We have already made progress in developing the main aspects of a third age service e.g. Joint Financial Assessment & Benefit Teams with local authorities. Experience and research evidence indicate that this is the right approach to integrated services. Already, nine joint teams are operational and plans are in place to roll out nationally over the next two years.

This, together with the work we are doing to enable partner organisations to take benefit claims and verify evidence (on which guidance has been issued), and the work on the Partnership Fund (which will be published in spring this year) shows that we are already delivering on the Government's Manifesto commitment which was 'to build on Care Direct to provide integration of health, housing, benefits and social care for older people'. We await the Lessons Learned report on Care Direct pilots (April 2004) before developing further building blocks.

Winter Fuel Payment

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will extend the winter fuel payment to severely disabled people under 60. [149097]

Malcolm Wicks: Help is already available through disability benefits and the disability premium in Income Support in recognition of the extra costs, including heating, which disabled people may have. There are no plans to extend the winter fuel payment scheme to disabled people under age 60.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Building Regulations

Sue Doughty: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what information he has collated on the ways in which other EU governments intend to implement Article 7.3 of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. [149365]

Phil Hope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Lewes (Norman Baker) on 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 723W.

Mr. Love: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he expects to report on the review of Part M of the Building Regulations; and if he will make a statement. [149611]

Phil Hope: The Building (Amendment) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2692), which amend the non-domestic elements of Part M of the Building Regulations, were laid before Parliament on 27 October 2003 and come into force on 1 May 2004. The revised Approved Document M (2004 Edition), which gives guidance on the application of the amended Regulations, was published on 5 November 2004 and announced in a press release from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003/0229).

Fire Services

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what plans there are to replace green goddesses with more up-to-date firefighting equipment. [149060]

Mr. Raynsford: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is currently considering alternatives to the green goddess (reserve) fleet. Drawing down the lessons from recent experiences, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister intends to have in place appropriate and effective emergency firefighting capabilities.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when the newly-appointed Chief Executive of Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, will be in post. [149055]

Phil Hope: An open competition to appoint a new chief executive will be announced shortly. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister expects to make a permanent appointment by early summer.

Government Office for London

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much Government money was distributed by the Government Office for London in each year since 1999–2000; and what is forecast to be distributed in 2003–04. [149601]

Yvette Cooper: Government Office for London (GOL) Programme expenditure is as follows:

£ million

	Programme expenditure
1999–2000	2,202
2000–01	1,605
2001–02	2,094
2002–03	2,530
2003–04	2,689

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the running costs of the Government Office for London were in each year since 1999–2000; and what the forecast is for 2003–04. [149602]

Yvette Cooper: Government Office for London (GOL) running cost expenditure is as follows:

£ million

1999–2000	16.0
2000–01	13.2
2001–02	13.2
2002–03	14.1
2003–04	16.6

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many staff were employed by the Government Office for London in each year since 1999–2000; and how many are forecast to be employed in 2003–04. [149603]

Yvette Cooper: Approximate full time equivalent posts from April 2000 are as follows:

Number

April 2000	370
April 2001	240
April 2002	260
April 2003	288

The forecast for 2003–04 is 310.

Mr. Mark Field: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the projects managed by the Government Office for London in 2003–04. [149604]

Yvette Cooper: Programmes managed by Government Office for London (GOL) in 2003–04:

Community Chest
Community Empowerment Fund
Community Learning Chest
Public Order and Community Cohesion
Disabled Facilities Grant
Estate Action
Greater London Authority General Grant
Greater London Authority Preparation Costs
Housing Action Trusts
Housing Investment Programme (HIP)
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
Neighbourhood Renewal—Skills and Knowledge
New Deal for Communities
Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders
Neighbourhood Wardens
Street Wardens
Street Crime Wardens
European Regional Development Fund (Objective 2)
Greater London Authority Transport Grant
Sustainable Development Publicity Budget
Community Champions
Community Champions Pathfinders
Connexions Grant Funding
Connexions (Drugs Education)
Positive Action for Young People
Transforming Youth Work (Development Funding)
Special Educational Needs/Disability Act
Vocational and Work Related Learning
Learning Partnership Networking.
London Development Agency Grants
New and Renewable Sources of Energy
European Structural Fund (ESF) Objective 2

European Structural Fund (ESF) Objective 3
Anti Social Behaviour Fund
Basic Command Unit Fund
Building Safer Communities Fund
Communication Funding
Gun Crime
Home Office Directors' Allocation Fund
Neighbourhood Renewal Capacity Building Fund
Drugs Team Strategic Grant
Recovered Assets Fund
Time Limited Development Fund
Small Retailers in Deprived Areas
Vehicle Crime
Violence Against Women

Housing (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the difference is between the housing capital allocation for local authorities in *(a)* Yorkshire and *(b)* Humberside for 2005–06 and 2004–05; what the basis is of the new allocations; what account they take of (i) the state of the stock, (ii) decent housing targets and (iii) repair backlogs; and how any money still to be allocated is to be made available. [149220]

Yvette Cooper: £76.110 million is being allocated to Yorkshire and the Humber local authorities for 2004–05 from the Single Regional Housing Pot, and £81.059 million for 2005–06. Resources for 2004–05 are fully allocated. £22.555 million remains to be allocated for 2005–06. Allocations made to date to authorities in *(a)* Yorkshire and *(b)* Humberside are as follows:

£ million

	2004–05	*2005–06*
Yorkshire	63.413	48.896
Humberside	12.697	9.608

Allocations for both years comprise a formulaic element (fully allocated) plus the outcome of Regional Housing Board (RHB) commissioning of proposals for private sector renewal, low demand (in specified areas), and 'transformational proposals' (2005–06 only). Proposals for the remaining resources have been commissioned, and will be considered by the Board at meetings up to September 2004.

Stock condition is an element in the indicator used for the formulaic element. Additionally, decent homes were taken into account through a Government Office survey of expenditure commitments.

I will write to my hon. Friend with additional information.

Liveability Fund

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the local authorities which have been successful in bidding for the Government's Liveability Fund; and what criteria were used to determine which authorities were successful. [148727]

Yvette Cooper: The 27 Liveability Fund pilots will be announced early next month.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's key selection criteria sought to secure a good regional balance (i.e. three pilots per region) and a cross-section of local authorities in terms of:

urban, rural, suburban and coastal location; and

levels of achievement in the Comprehensive Performance Assessments (where appropriate).

It also sought to ensure a range of areas with very different levels of deprivation, but with a greater number of local authorities in deprived areas, reflecting the higher incidence of poor quality spaces there.

Registered Social Landlords

Mr. Byers: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many tenants of registered social landlords there are *(a)* in England, *(b)* in each housing authority area and *(c)* in each region. [148732]

Yvette Cooper: As at 31 March 2003:

(a) The estimated number of RSL tenancies in England was 1,684,500.

(b) The estimated number of tenancies by Government Office Region were as shown in the following table:

Government Office Region	*Total occupied RSL stock*
North East	98,500
North West	294,300
Yorkshire and the Humber	116,000
East Midlands	94,900
West Midlands	213,700
East	154,300
London	303,300
South East	253,300
South West	156,200
England	1,684,500

Note:
Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.
Source:
Primarily the Housing Corporation's Regulatory and Statistical Return for 2003 but with minor adjustments to reflect two late transfers of stock within the local authority areas of North Hertfordshire and Forest of Dean.

(c) The numbers for local authorities (housing authority areas) are available in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Operation Global Mercury

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what lessons have been learned from Operation Global Mercury; whether identified failings have been addressed; and if he will make a statement. [147539]

Mr. Hutton: The evaluation report and a summary are available on the Department of Health website at http://www.doh.gov.uk/cmo/exerciseglobalmercury/index.htm, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Work is underway to implement all of the recommendations identified in the report.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the vacancy *(a)* rates and *(b)* numbers for NHS ambulance staff, broken down by grade, in (i) England and (ii) each ambulance service in each of the last six years; [147934]

(2) how many ambulance staff have been employed in the NHS in *(a)* England and *(b)* each ambulance service for each of the last six years, broken down by grade. [147935]

Mr. Hutton: Information on the number and rate of vacancies lasting three months or more in each year since 1999, the first year the data was collected centrally, and the number of ambulance staff employed in the national health service since 1996 has been placed in the Library.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish the guidelines given to NHS trusts in reporting cancelled operations, with particular reference to guidelines on the use of stand-by lists of patients who may be operated on that day if capacity allows; [146338]

(2) what proportion of hours per week operating theatres were used on average in *(a)* England, *(b)* each strategic health authority and *(c)* each NHS trust, in the latest week for which figures are available; [146341]

(3) what research his Department has commissioned on links between ward bed availability and cancellation of scheduled operation lists. [146342]

Mr. Hutton: Guidance on reporting last minute cancelled operations is made available to the national health service through the Department of Health NHS web. A copy has been placed in the Library. No national guidance exists on the use of stand-by lists. The operation of stand-by lists is a matter for individual NHS trusts in consultation with their commissioners.

In addition, the Modernisation Agency's operating theatre and pre-operative assessment programme is supporting NHS trusts to implement good practice guidance on tackling cancelled operations and effective utilisation of operating theatres.

The programme has published good practice such as the "Step Guide to Improving Operating Theatre Performance" published in June 2002 which sets out four key steps, or stages, to improving operating theatre performance and reducing cancelled operations. It contains diagnostic tools and common sense, practical solutions for trusts to increase theatre utilisation and improve patient care.

Information on the usage of operating theatres is not collected centrally by the Department.

As part of a larger project, the Department of Health commissioned York University to carry out some modelling of bed occupancy. Findings from the study were published in the BMJ: "Dynamics of bed use in accommodating emergency admissions: stochastic simulation model"—Adrian Bagust et at BMJ vol. 319, 17 July 1999, pages 155–158, a copy of which has also been placed in the Library.

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the rules relating to the time of cancellation for acute hospital trusts to record operations as cancelled for non-clinical reasons. [147189]

Mr. Hutton: The Department of Health collects data on the number of operations cancelled by the hospital for non-clinical reasons (i) at the last minute (that is, on the day patients are due to arrive, or after arrival in hospital, or on the day of their operation), and (ii) the number of patients not admitted within 28 days of a 'last minute' cancellation as part of the NHS Plan cancelled operations guarantee.

The NHS Plan cancelled operations guarantee introduced in April 2002, states if a patient's operation is cancelled by the hospital on the day of surgery for non-clinical reasons, the hospital will have to offer another binding date within a maximum of the next 28 days, or fund the patient's treatment at the time and hospital of the patient's choice.

Care Homes

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for H[illegible]h (1) what estimate he has made of the proportion of elderly patients in care and residential homes who are *(a)* malnourished and *(b)* assessed as being at risk of becoming malnourished; [147313]

(2) if he will introduce mandatory screening for malnutrition for people in care homes; and if he will make a statement. [147314]

Dr. Ladyman: According to the "National Diet and Nutrition Survey: people aged 65 years and over", published in 1998, 16 per cent. of men and 15 per cent. of women living in care homes were classified as underweight. The more recent Health Survey for England 2000 gave figures of 8 per cent. for men and 11 per cent. for women. In both cases, underweight was defined as a person with a body mass index of less than 20. We do not have figures estimating people at risk of becoming malnourished.

We have no plans to introduce mandatory screening for malnutrition for people in care homes. A number of measures and strategies are in place to manage, monitor and screen people for under nutrition in care homes. Before going into a home every resident should have a detailed needs assessment. This includes nutrition and screening for malnutrition. The assessment should be revised at regular intervals. The home should draw up a care plan for each resident based on his or her needs assessment. The care plan should be reviewed at least once a month to monitor changes in the resident's needs.

The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) regulates care homes in accordance with statutory regulations and national minimum standards to ensure they provide for the needs of their residents. The Care Homes Regulations require homes to provide adequate quantities of suitable, wholesome and nutritious food for service users; and to maintain records of the food provided for service users in sufficient detail to enable inspectors to determine whether the diet is satisfactory, in relation to nutrition and otherwise. Standard 19 of the national standards for care homes for older people sets out what care homes are expected to do to ensure

residents are properly fed. This includes giving people assistance with eating where necessary. The NCSC will take swift action where it has concerns about the welfare of residents.

Dentistry

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the change in full-time equivalents in post in the dental workforce as a result of early retirement was in each year since 1990. [147501]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The available information shown in the table from the NHS Pensions Agency is for the number of pensions awarded where a national health service pension has been claimed prior to the scheme's normal retirement age. These will include pensions paid on the grounds of ill health, premature retirements following redundancy and voluntary early retirement before age 60 (introduced from 6 March 1995). Since 1997, the number of dentists working in the NHS general dental service (GDS) in England has increased from 16,728 to 18,500, but dentists can vary the amount of dental work they do and the proportion carried out in the GDS.

Early retirement of dentists

	Total dentist pension awards
1997	197
1998	179
1999	161
2000	152
2001	191
2002	173
2003	170

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS employees were expelled in each of the last five years. [148945]

Mr. Hutton: This information is not held centrally.

Diagnostic and Treatment Centres

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which inspectorate (1) *(a)* has responsibility and *(b)* will have responsibility after 1 April for (i) registering and (ii) inspecting independent diagnostic and treatment centres; [148681]

(2) how clinical governance in independent diagnostic and treatment centres will be *(a)* inspected and *(b)* audited. [148683]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Currently, the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) has responsibility, under the Care Standards Act 2000, for registering and inspecting independent treatment centres in England against the National Minimum Standards and Regulations issued by the Secretary of State in February 2002.

The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) also has powers, under the NHS Reform and Healthcare Professions Act 2002, to inspect the clinical governance arrangements of treatment centres providing healthcare for national health service bodies.

From 1 April 2004, responsibility for these functions will transfer from the NCSC and CHI to the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (CHAI, under the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003. CHAI will also publish an annual report to Parliament on the state of healthcare, which will include a section on what it has found as the registration authority of independent health care providers.

E-auction

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what further plans he has for the use of e-auction as a method of purchasing clinically prescribed equipment in the NHS [R]; [149051]

(2) what plans he has to regulate the use of e-auction by NHS bodies.[R] [149052]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* E-auctions have been used extensively in the private sector and have resulted in significant savings.

The national health service Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) is conducting pilot e-auctions to establish if they will provide best value for money for the NHS and in which areas they are most effective.

Five e-auctions had been carried out up to the end of December 2003, which had resulted in savings to the NHS of £16 million pounds. PASA will fully evaluate the results of these pilot exercises from March 2004, and make recommendations on the future use of e-auctions in the NHS.

Hospital Beds (Lincolnshire)

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what change in the number of beds available for NHS treatment in Pilgrim Hospital, Boston there has been in each year since 1995. [148476]

Dr. Ladyman: Information on the average daily number of beds is collected annually from each national health service trust. Information is not collected for individual hospital sites.

The number of available beds from 1995–96 to 1999–2000 for Pilgrim Health NHS Trust is shown in table 1. In April 2000, Pilgrim Health merged with two other NHS trusts to form United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust. Information on available beds for this trust is shown in table 2.

Table 1: average daily number of available beds in wards open overnight, Pilgrim Health NHS Trust, 1995–96 to 1999–2000

Year	*Total beds*	*Change from previous year*
1995–96	576	—
1996–97	575	-1
1997–98	587	12
1998–99	564	-23
1999–2000	586	22

Source:
Department of Health form KH03.

Table 2: average daily number of available beds in wards open overnight. United Lincolnshire NHS Trust, 2000–01 to 2002–03

Year	Total beds	Change from previous year
2000–01	1,560	—
2001–02	1,575	15
2002–03	1,556	-19

Source:
Department of Health form KH03.

IT Contracts

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost was of the computer contract signed between his Department and BT; what the contract covers; what time period is covered by the contract; whether this technology will be available to help the roll-out of broadband in rural areas; and if he will make a statement. [147917]

Mr. Hutton: Two separate contracts have been awarded to BT under the national programme for information technology in the national health service in England:

1. to set up and run a core database or "spine" for the national care record service (NCRS), worth a total of £620 million. This will provide access to key summary information on a patient and their condition/treatment for healthcare professionals who are authorised and have a need to use it; and

2. to provide local systems and services to integrate, access and use the NCRS in London. This includes providing IT support at a local level, delivering essential infrastructure and connection/compatibility to existing systems in the NHS in the London cluster. This contract is worth a total of £996 million.

Depending on the proof of solution, successful roll-out and ongoing performance, both contracts will run until 2013.

The contracts do not cover the provision of new national networking services and broadband capacity for the NHS. This is the subject of a separate procurement exercise and is expected to be concluded in the first quarter of 2004. The delivery of new systems across the NHS will be dependent upon network provision.

Kidderminster Diagnostic and Treatment Centre

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the reasons are for the delay in opening the Kidderminster diagnostic and treatment centre; and whether the contractors are subject to penalty payments. [148698]

Dr. Ladyman: The Kidderminster Treatment Centre has changed significantly from the project as it was originally envisaged. There has been extra investment in services and facilities, including an additional operating theatre.

The contract was agreed on a fixed price basis, which has both protected the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals national health service trust from unexpected financial pressures, and removed the need to impose penalty payments on the contractors.

Nurses

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the proportion of nurses per head of population was in *(a)* St. Helens, *(b)* Merseyside, *(c)* the North West and *(d)* England in each year since 1992. [147169]

Mr. Hutton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Qualified nursing staff and practice nurses employed by unrestricted principals and Equivalents (UPEs)[1] per 1,000 of the population—England

Number (headcount)

	1992[2,4]	1993[2,4]	1994	1995[3]	1996[3]
England					
Population	47,996,067	48,100,501	48,222,889	48,364,999	48,496,224
Practice nurses	16,635	17,517	16,500	18,243	17,898
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.35	0.36	0.34	0.38	0.37
Qualified nursing staff[5]	301,253	293,379	289,284	298,650	297,351
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	6.20	6.10	6.00	6.17	6.21
of which:					
North West Government Office Region					
Population	6,866,001	6,867,220	6,854,423	6,840,280	6,818,344
Practice nurses	2,175	2,110	1,862	2,166	2,226
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.32	0.31	0.27	0.32	0.33
Qualified nursing staff[5]	—	—	—	—	46,895
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	—	—	—	—	6.88
of which:					
Cheshire and Merseyside SHA					
Population	2,394,912	2,393,143	2,387,016	2,380,168	2,372,525
Practice nurses	805	713	576	713	726
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.34	0.30	0.24	0.30	0.31
Qualified nursing staff[5]	—	—	—	—	15,166
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	—	—	—	—	6.39
of which:					
St. Helens's and Knowsley HA					
Population	333,706	332,623	331,630	330,392	329,915
Practice nurses	100	95	97	104	106
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.30	0.29	0.29	0.31	0.32
Qualified nursing staff[5]	1,594	1,578	1,530	1,561	1,642
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	4.78	4.72	4.61	4.72	4.98

	1997	1998[4]	1999[4]	2000	2001	2002
England						
Population	48,635,908	48,789,240	48,986,999	49,166,627	49,389,736	49,558,821
Practice nurses	18,389	18,894	19,495	19,200	19,846	20,983
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.38	0.39	0.40	0.39	0.40	0.42
Qualified nursing staff[5]	300,467	304,563	310,142	316,752	330,535	346,537
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	6.18	6.24	6.33	6.44	6.69	6.99
of which:						
North West Government Office Region						
Population	6,800,318	6,793,833	6,770,152	6,769,483	6,767,217	6,770,981
Practice nurses	2,261	2,335	2,566	2,411	2,602	2,616
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.33	0.34	0.38	0.36	0.38	0.39
Qualified nursing staff[5]	46,213	46,901	47,672	48,395	48,821	53,373
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	6.80	6.90	7.04	7.15	7.21	7.88
of which:						
Cheshire and Merseyside SHA						
Population	2,365,631	2,361,200	2,350,901	2,349,300	2,349,581	2,347,088
Practice nurses	690	682	794	782	849	905
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.29	0.29	0.34	0.33	0.36	0.39
Qualified nursing staff[5]	14,874	15,319	15,766	16,473	17,150	19,091
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	6.29	6.49	6.71	7.01	7.30	8.13
of which:						
St. Helens's and Knowsley HA						
Population	329,194	328,976	327,852	327,592	—	—
Practice nurses	101	115	114	110	111	—
Practice nurses per 1,000 of population	0.31	0.35	0.35	0.34	—	—
Qualified nursing staff[5]	1,637	1,607	1,652	1,682	1,795	—
Qualified nursing per 1,000 of population	4.97	4.88	5.04	5.13	—	—

[1] UPEs includes GMS unrestricted principals, PMS contracted GPs and PMS salaried GPs.
[2] Figures for 1992 to 1994 may not be fully comparable with other data due to under-reporting of fundholding practice staff by FHSAs.
[3] Includes estimated data for Buckinghamshire.
[4] Headcount practice nurse figures are estimated for these years.
[5] Refers to qualified nursing staff in the hospital, public health and community health service sectors.
Notes:
1. Data as at 1 October 1992–99 and 30 September 2000–02.
2. A new classification of the non-medical workforce was introduced in 1995. Information based on this classification is not directly comparable with earlier years.
3.'—' Accurate comparable information is not available.
Sources:
Department of Health General and Personal Medical Services Statistics
Department of Health Non-medical Workforce Census
2001 ONS Population Census

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer of 5 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 203W, on nurse recruitment, if he will list the countries from which his Department has received written representations regarding the recruitment of nurses; and if he will make a statement. [148050]

Mr. Hutton: The Government has nurse recruitment agreements with Spain, the Philippines, India and Indonesia. A memorandum of understanding has recently been signed with the Government of South Africa.

The Chinese Government has recently written to the Department to ask for a meeting to discuss opportunities for nurse recruitment.

Oxfordshire Primary Care Trusts

Mr. Boris Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the proposal to amalgamate the South East Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust with the South West Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust. [148477]

Ms Rosie Winterton: There is currently no proposal for a formal merger of the two primary care trusts (PCTs). The South East and South West Oxfordshire PCTs have been exploring ways of working more closely together in the delivery of services to their populations. This has included the appointment of a single chief executive and management structure, while retaining separate boards.

Prescription Fraud

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average annual cost of prescription fraud has been in the last five years. [148834]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The National Health Service Counter Fraud and Security Management Service (NHS CFSMS) has an ongoing programme of highly accurate risk measurement exercises—accurate to plus or minus one per cent.—designed to reveal levels of loss s and, through repeated exercises, reduction in such losses, where they take place.

The latest available data on pharmaceutical patient fraud is shown in the table.

£ million

Year data selected	Fraud losses
1998–99	117
1999–2000	69

Point of dispensing checks were introduced in all community pharmacies on 1 April 1999 to help deter this type of fraud. The check requires pharmacists to ask patients who are claiming free prescriptions to produce evidence to support their claim to exemption from prescription charges. Later data will be produced shortly.

Private Contractors

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he will ensure that private contractors in the NHS will not be able to recruit NHS staff indirectly through private agencies. [148462]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* New treatment centres run by the independent sector will be precluded as part of the contracts they sign from poaching National Health Service staff. The recruitment of NHS staff indirectly through private agencies would breach this contract.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where the staff required by private contractors are expected to come from if they cannot be recruited from the NHS; and what proportion of recruitment is expected to be from abroad. [148463]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The procurement of independent sector treatment centres (IS-TCs) is designed to contribute to a genuine increase in workforce capacity to treat national health service patients. This is why bidders have been asked to provide as many non-NHS staff as possible: primarily from overseas. In some circumstances, it will be appropriate for NHS staff to work in independent sector treatment centres but this will only be done under a structured arrangement that is agreed between the NHS and the IS-TC provider. The number of professional staff working in these new units and the proportion from overseas will be finalised during the stage of negotiations leading to contract close.

Private Contractors (Netcare)

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of whether, over the long-term, Netcare will employ staff that would otherwise have been employed by the NHS. [148464]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* As part of its contract, Netcare is required to provide an additional workforce.

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the change in the number of health professionals from South Africa working in the UK as a result of the award of contracts to run fast-track surgery centres to Netcare; and what assessment he has made of the effect of this change on the South African health service. [148465]

Mr. Hutton *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Clinical teams working in the independent sector treatment centres from abroad will work on a rotational basis. The exact amount of time spent in the United Kingdom will depend on the contractual agreements made between the provider and its staff. This programme will not recruit clinical staff from existing hospital facilities.

The new memorandum of understanding between South Africa and this Government recognises the benefit for the South African health care system by offering South African and English healthcare professionals the chance to go on time-limited placements to the other country.

Scrutiny Committees

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the maximum number of local government overview scrutiny committees is that a national service within the NHS could have to report to under the terms of the Health and Social Care Act 2001. [148811]

Ms Rosie Winterton: If a National Health Service body is proposing a variation in or development to its services it must consult all the overview and scrutiny committees of those local authorities for which the proposal represents a substantial one.

A NHS organisation which provides services to the whole country must first establish which of the 150 overview and scrutiny committees (those committees with the powers to scrutinise health services) believe the proposal is substantial for their populations. The NHS body involved need only consult those committees that specify that the proposal is substantial for their own populations. Those committees must form a joint committee to respond to that consultation; and that only joint committee may respond.

Student Nurses

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of student nurses who enrolled for courses in *(a)* general nursing, *(b)* paediatric nursing, *(c)* midwifery and *(d)* psychiatric nursing successfully completed their course in each year since 1973. [148647]

Mr. Hutton: Information for England on the percentage of pre-registration student nurses who have completed their course is shown in the following table. Data is not held before the 1994–95 financial year and has not been collected since October 2001. It is therefore only accurate for cohorts up to 1997–98, most students on subsequent cohorts had not completed courses by October 2001.

Pre-registration student nurses who have completed their course

Percentage

Year of cohort	Midwifery	Adult	Mental health	Learning disability	Child
1994–95	75.27	78.18	76.51	70.73	77.43
1995–96	78.13	76.67	74.14	72.67	74.31
1996–97	73.48	75.32	73.05	67.59	74.29
1997–98	74.33	72.27	70.31	65.28	70.42

Note:
This data is based on a snapshot in time of a particular cohort(s) and therefore each year there will still be students who have yet to complete their course.

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the drop-out rate was in England for student nurses studying *(a)* general nursing, *(b)* paediatric nursing, *(c)* midwifery and *(d)* psychiatric nursing in each year since 1973. [148648]

Mr. Hutton: Most recent information for England on the percentage of pre-registration student nurses who have left their course is shown in the table. Data is not held before the1994–95 financial year.

Pre-registration student nurses who have left their course

Percentage

	Midwifery	*Adult*	*Mental health*	*Learning disability*	*Child*
1994–95	22.08	18.87	19.91	25.64	19.66
1995–96	17.43	17.75	20.56	20.29	19.46
1996–97	21.84	18.91	19.58	24.44	20.05
1997–98	18.23	18.82	20.05	21.67	21.95
1998–99	17.17	17.61	16.18	19.74	16.99
1999–2000	14.59	12.45	12.63	14.6	15.86
2000–01	6.7	5.98	6.47	6.48	6.75

Note:
This data is based on a snapshot in time of a particular cohort(s) and therefore each year there will still be students who have yet to complete their course. The last data collection was October 2001 so the attrition rate for the later cohorts is incomplete.

Worcestershire Royal Infirmary

Dr. Richard Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much the unitary fee for the Worcestershire Royal Infirmary increases each year; and whether this annual increase was specified in the contract. [148699]

Dr. Ladyman: The annual uplift in the unitary fee for Worcestershire Royal Infirmary is specified in the contract.

The unitary fee is uplifted by the General Index of Retail Prices (RPI) each year, unless the Whitley council pay increase for ancillary staff exceeds this level. In this case, the uplift for pay on the soft service element of the contract (eg., catering and domestic services, etc.) is as per the Whitley council agreement and the non staff costs associated with these soft services is uplifted at RPI less 1 per cent.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 January 2004

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

GM Crops

Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the benefits of Bayer GM rice approved by her Department as animal feed on 7 January. [148610]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The application by Bayer for the importation of herbicide tolerant rice (event LLRICE62) into the European Union is being considered under the procedures set out in Directive 2001/18/EC. The Directive requires each application to market GM crops for commercial importation or cultivation to be assessed on a case-by-case basis on the scientific evidence of any risks it may pose to human health or the environment. The Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment concluded that, "This GM rice does not pose a risk to human health and the environment. The marketing of this product for importation and processing in the UK will be no different from that of other rice imported for processing and animal feed purposes." No assessment is required or made of comparative advantages with other products. The full UK assessment of Bayer's application is available on the Defra website at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/regulation/euconsent.htm.

The UK is the lead member state on the application and therefore undertakes the initial assessment. The application and the UK's assessment will now be assessed by other EU member states and the Commission before a collective decision is made. Consent, if granted, would not permit cultivation of the rice in the EU nor, without separate approval, could it be used in human food.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to *(a)* conduct and *(b)* commission further research on how GM plants might invade new habitats. [148903]

Mr Morley: The Department has commissioned research on the potential invasiveness of GM crops. An example is "An Investigation of Feral Oilseed Rape Populations" the report of which was published in February 1999. Details of this and other Defra-funded research projects that have included a consideration of the invasiveness of GM crops are available on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/research.

In addition to work funded by the Department there has been a large body of research on the invasiveness of GM and other plants conducted elsewhere. This body of research was recently reviewed by the GM Science Review (details available from www.gmsciencedebate.org.uk). Chapter 6.2 of the their final report specifically considered research on the risks of invasiveness of GM crops.

The risks of invasiveness of GM crops are carefully assessed prior to any release. The Government's statutory advisers on GM crop releases—the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE)—have advised that in the case of all previous releases, that the risks of invasiveness have been low. This view was supported by the Science Review. However both ACRE and the Science Review highlight the need to continually monitor developments and we are currently considering future research requirements in this area.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the evaluation of the costs and benefits of the commercial cultivation of GM crops in the UK over the next 10 to 15 years. [148905]

Mr. Morley: As part of the GM dialogue the Strategy Unit carried out a study of the costs and benefits of GM crops. This looked at not only the range of GM crops currently available, but also those that might be available in 10–15 years.

The unit concluded that GM crops could offer some cost and convenience advantages to UK farmers, although any economic benefit is likely to be limited in the short-term as only a narrow range of existing GM crops are currently suited to UK conditions, and weak consumer demand may limit take-up. In the longer term it concluded that future developments in GM crops have the potential to offer more wide-ranging benefits, to both farmers and consumers.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the Government will decide their GM food policy. [148906]

Mr. Morley: We are considering our policy on GM food and crops generally in the light of all the information we have gathered. That includes the reports of the public debate and the science review, the Strategy Unit's costs and benefits study, the AEBC's report on coexistence and liability, and now ACRE'S advice on the FSE results. We will set out our conclusions in due course.

Badgers

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what research she has evaluated in which badgers have been systematically removed from an area, and the area kept free of badgers, where the incidence of TB in cattle has declined; and what conclusions she drew from this work. [148660]

Mr. Bradshaw: Four large-scale badger clearances have been carried out, at Thornbury in Avon (104 sq km), at Steeple Leaze in Dorset (12 sq km), at Hartland in North Devon (about 62 sq km) and in an area of East Offaly in the Irish Republic (738 sq km). All four clearances were followed by a reduction in the incidence of TB in cattle.

However, none of the previous TB control strategies that involved badger culling have been assessed in a properly designed experiment to establish their efficacy. While removal operations may have had an effect on the prevalence of TB in badgers and on herd breakdowns, other factors may also have influenced these. In the

absence of scientific controls, it is not possible to separate out the effects of badger removal from these confounding factors.

A complete assessment of previous TB control strategies can be found in the 1997 Report on Bovine Tuberculosis in Cattle and Badgers by Professor John Krebs and the Independent Scientific Review Group (the "Krebs Report"), available in the House Library.

Mr. Paterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what assessment she has made of the resources necessary to ensure that a given area is cleared and kept free of badgers, with particular reference to *(a)* number of visits and *(b)* personnel employed; [148651]

(2) what *(a)* financial and *(b)* human resources are allocated to the (i) clearance of badgers and (ii) the maintenance of badger-free areas in the Krebs proactive areas. [148659]

Mr. Bradshaw: As part of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial (RBCT), ten areas are subject to "proactive" treatment. As many badgers as possible within the design of the trial are culled in these areas (each approximately 100 sq km) and badger numbers are kept as low as possible. After the initial cull, the work involves an annual re-survey and cull of all proactive areas. However, the human resources for "proactive" work cannot be separately identified, except at disproportionate cost.

Information on the costs of trapping as a "proactive" culling method in the RBCT cannot be used to assess the resources required to clear an area of badgers, because this would require the use of snares, poisoning or gassing which have been ruled out by the Government on welfare grounds. The RBCT clears as many badgers as possible from proactive areas using cage traps, but this removes, at best, 80 per cent. of badgers.

The average number of field staff employed by the Veterinary Directorate Wildlife Unit for field operations in the RBCT and the associated costs by financial year are given in the following table:

WLU Field Staff and Costs

Year	*Number of Field Staff*	*Total cost of Wildlife Unit (£ million)*
1998–1999	62	2.9
1999–2000	90	4.2
2000–2001	110	5.5
2001–2002	136	5.5
2002–2003	127	5.6
2003–2004[1]	133	6.8

[1] projected

For most of 2001, field staff were reassigned to dealing with the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. Over the first three years of the Trial, contracts to carry out initial Triplet surveying were negotiated with the Central Science Laboratory and ADAS and additionally small numbers of staff were deployed from elsewhere in the Department to support major proactive cull operations. Badger culling, however, is always carried out by Wildlife Unit personnel.

Carbon Trust

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures are in place to assess the effectiveness of the enhanced capital allowances scheme managed by the Carbon Trust; and if she will make a statement. [148915]

Mr Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* On behalf of Defra the Carbon Trust are carrying out an Impact Assessment of the Enhanced Capital Allowance for energy-saving technologies. Defra and the Carbon Trust will use the results of the assessment to consider further promotion of the scheme to ensure that it has the greatest possible impact.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with EU Ministers in connection with the Common Agricultural Policy since the Agriculture Council in June 2003. [148861]

Alun Michael: Since June last year, the Common Agricultural Policy has been on the agenda at several of the monthly meetings of the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or her ministerial colleagues have attended. At its September meeting, agreement was reached on the Council Regulation implementing the June reform agreement. Since then, there has been discussion of the European Commission's proposals for further reform of the CAP, covering the cotton, tobacco, olive oil and hops sectors and of options for reforming the sugar regime.

In addition, my right hon. Friend discussed CAP reform with the Irish Agriculture Minister in November as part of his preparations for Ireland's presidency of the European Union. Agriculture was also a major issue at the WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun in September at which my right hon. Friend discussed the June agreement and future CAP reform with her EU colleagues.

Mr. Dhanda: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with colleagues in the Department for International Development in connection with the development implications of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. [148862]

Alun Michael: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, has regular meetings with her colleagues from other Departments, including the Secretary of State for International Development, to discuss issues relating to the current World Trade Organisation negotiations. These discussions encompass the relationship between development and CAP reform.

Flood Defence Plan (Cheltenham)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the *(a)* advantages and *(b)* disadvantages of the proposed flood defence plan for Cheltenham. [148540]

Mr. Morley: Defra agreed the Environment Agency's strategic approach to flood management measures for Cheltenham in 1999 and has since provided grant to the Agency for the first three phases of works. Defra is currently considering the Agency's application for grant on the detailed proposals on the remaining four phases of works but in any event the commencement of works must necessarily await the outcome of the Agency's application for planning permission for these works. I understand that the Agency's proposals would reduce the risk of flooding to over 600 properties and provide environmental and amenity benefits. I also understand that there are local concerns about disruption during construction, the removal of trees (although a major planting scheme is planned in mitigation) and a change in the use that could be made of an area identified by the Agency as a flood storage area. It will be for the planning authority to reach a view on the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed works in the first instance.

US Ships (Decommissioning)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the purpose was of the meeting held on 7 January, involving the Environment Minister, at which ghost ships were discussed; who requested the meeting; what factors were taken into account before the Minister agreed to meet representatives of Able UK Ltd.; what the outcome of the meeting was; and if she will make a statement. [148616]

Mr Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* I met the right hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr Mandelson), at his request, with the Mayor and Chief Executive of Hartlepool Borough Council and the Chief Executive of Able UK. The meeting agreed that the issue of the US Ships in Hartlepool is a matter for the regulatory bodies—in particular, the Environment Agency and the local planning authority. The meeting enabled the participants to understand the respective responsibilities of the bodies involved, and to help ensure that all the necessary procedures are followed.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the Environment Minister will agree to meet a delegation representing groups and individuals opposed to the proposed dismantling of US ghost ships in Hartlepool. [148617]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* I am always happy to consider requests to meet local delegations from the relevant Member of Parliament. I recently met my right hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), along with Mayor of Hartlepool and others, to discuss the US ships.

Joint Environmental Markets Unit

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total cost to public funds was of the Joint Environmental Markets Unit in each of the past 10 years; and what the total value is of waste management contracts which British companies have secured overseas as a direct result of the activity of the Joint Environmental Markets Unit in each of these years. [144575]

Mr. Morley: JEMU is a joint unit between DEFRA and DTI. JEMU provide support for the environmental goods and services industry, of which waste management is a sub sector. The total public funds (from both departments) spent on the Joint Environmental Markets Unit over the past 10 years are as follows:

Year	*Total budgets (£000)*
1993–94	[1]488
1994–95	[1]819
1995–96	[1]1,032
1996–97	[1]990
1997–98	[1]1,133
1998–99	[1]1,046
1999–2000	[1]1,026
2000–01	[1]1,305
2001–02	[1]1,254
2002–03	1,333
2003–04 (Year's allocation)	1,404

[1] These figures are an estimate based on available records.

JEMU targets its international trade work at developing markets, where it can add most value. JEMU has worked with other parts of Defra and the Environment Agency to promote UK Environmental Policy as a means of marketing UK expertise. Relationships in these countries take time and persistence to develop and contracts can take several years to be finalised. JEMU is aware of at least two waste management companies who, in recent years, have won contracts totalling in excess of £5 million as a direct result of JEMU work. Feedback from waste companies, who participated in a JEMU trade mission to SE Asia last March, has also forecasted total potential business of £63 million over the next three years. JEMU introduced a systematic method of monitoring performance recently, and will be evaluating the results of this carefully.

Large Combustion Plant Directive

Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what research she has commissioned into the economic effects of the introduction of the Large Combustion Plant Directive on the United Kingdom coal industry. [148511]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* We are continuing to assess the potential economic impact of the introduction of the Directive on the UK coal industry, and on the coal-fired electricity generating industry which is its major market, using both internal analyses and independent research. We are also in detailed dialogue with these industries to help us to understand their views.

Livestock Farming

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the recovery of livestock farming in *(a)* Chorley and *(b)* Lancashire; and if she will make a statement. [148228]

Alun Michael: Other than the June annual Agricultural Census, which among other things records the number of animals present on holdings on the designated census day, no specific assessment has been

made of the recovery of livestock farming in Chorley and Lancashire. Data from the Agricultural Census[1] show the following:

[1] June 2003 data is expected to be published in March.

	Chorley	*Lancashire*
Sheep and Lambs		
2000	35,337	776,586
2001	31,502	703,205
2002	29,887	656,886
Cattle and Calves		
2000	14,941	250,038
2001	15,435	245,617
2002	14,676	227,990
Pigs		
2000	6,369	113,640
2001	6,184	100,845
2002	4,685	94,048

Milk

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the total supermarket share of the *(a)* liquid milk and *(b)* cheese market was in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [148691]

Alun Michael: The supermarket share of the biggest four supermarkets (Asda, Safeways, Sainsburys and Tesco) of liquid milk in 2001–02 was 36 per cent. If smaller supermarkets are included (excluding town centre and local shops) the share rises to 48 per cent. The corresponding market shares for cheese are 64 per cent. for the big four and 80 per cent for all supermarkets. Figures are from the Expenditure and Food Survey and are only available for the twelve month period ending in March 2002.

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the outcome of the retail price initiatives on liquid milk and cheese during the last three years. [148692]

Alun Michael: The evolution of farmgate and retail prices over the last three years is tabulated below. Last year, in a Milk Development Council commissioned study by KPMG on "Prices and Profitability in the British Dairy Chain", London Economics undertook an econometric study of various aspects of the supply chain, including price transmission. For the UK, London Economics found that increases and decreases in retail prices for liquid milk are fully transmitted to farmgate prices with a lag of five months. However, price changes at farmgate level are not fully transmitted. A 1 unit increase in farmgate price results in a 0.56 unit increase in retail price, while a 1 unit decrease in farmgate prices results in a 0.71 unit decrease in retail price. For cheese they found no transmission and for butter they found some evidence that a fall in the farmgate price of milk resulted in an increase in the butter price.

Farmgate/Retail Milk Price Comparison July 2000—November 2003

Year	*Farmgate pence per pint*	*Retail[1] pence per pint*
November 2000	10.57	35
December 2000	10.38	35
January 2001	10.41	35
February 2001	10.33	36
March 2001	10.16	36
April 2001	10.48	36
May-2001	10.17	37
June 2001	10.63	37
July 2001	11.62	37
August 2001	11.85	37
September 2001	11.76	37
October 2001	11.63	37
November 2001	11.39	37
December 2001	11.14	37
January 2002	10.68	37
February 2002	10.40	36
March 2002	10.23	36
April 2002	9.09	36
May 2002	8.45	36
June 2002	8.73	36
July 2002	9.42	36
August 2002	9.66	36
September 2002	9.73	36
October 2002	10.31	37
November 2002	10.29	37
December 2002	10.09	37
January 2003	10.05	37
February 2003	10.03	36
March 2003	9.88	36
April 2003	9.57	36
May 2003	9.09	36
June 2003	9.39	36
July 2003	10.35	37
August 2003	10.77	37
September 2003	10.94	37
October 2003	11.14	37
November 2003	11.17	37

[1] The retail price is an average of one pint of delivered milk and one pint of shop bought milk. Because most milk is shop bought this overstates what is actually paid per pint by most consumers.
Source:
Defra/National Statistics

Municipal Waste

Mr. Bill O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the application by the Department for a derogation for *(a)* 2006, *(b)* 2009 and *(c)* 2016 on the biodegradable municipal waste diversion targets of the Landfill Directive. [148757]

Mr. Morley: Article 5.2 of the Landfill Directive lays down demanding targets for reducing the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill and the timescale for achieving those targets. The targets require the quantity of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill to be reduced to 75 per cent. of the total amount (by weight) of such waste produced in 1995 by 2006; to 50 per cent. by 2009; and to 35 per cent. by 2016.

For those member states (like the UK) which landfilled more than 80 per cent. of their municipal waste in 1995, the Directive contains a derogation permitting a delay to the target dates by up to four years i.e. to 2010, 2013 and 2020. If a member state intends to take advantage of this derogation, there is an obligation on it to inform the Commission in advance. The UK will

meet that obligation by informing the Commission at least a year in advance if it intends to make use of the derogation for a target year. As was made clear in the recent consultation, planning for the Landfill Allowances Trading Scheme assumes that the derogation will be used for all three target years.

Pollution Prevention

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to require companies storing oil to undertake environmental risk assessments. [148916]

Mr Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* There are no plans to require this. However, a full assessment of a company's site to identify potential sources of pollution and the development of a plan to minimise these risks is a central recommendation in the Environment Agency's Pollution Prevention Guidance on Industrial Sites (PPG11).

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to place the Environment Agency's pollution prevention guidelines on a statutory footing; and if she will make a statement. [148917]

Mr. Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* There are currently 27 Pollution Prevention Guidelines jointly published by the Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Environment & Heritage Service for Northern Ireland. These establish best practice for the prevention of pollution for a wide range of sectors and activities. Where appropriate, statutory codes of practice may refer to the standards set in the Pollution Prevention Guidelines. There are no plans at present to change the status of the Guidelines themselves.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to extend the Oil Storage Regulations to cover *(a)* domestic and agricultural waste oil and *(b)* underground oil storage tanks. [148918]

Mr Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* There are no current plans to extend the regulations. Separate regulations are already in place for agricultural fuel oil, waste oil storage is subject to waste regulation controls and statutory guidance is in place for underground oil storage. Large domestic storage tanks are already included in the Oil Storage Regulations and all new domestic installations are now subject to control under building regulations.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to establish a targeted inspection and enforcement regime in connection with the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) (England) 2001 Regulations; and if she will make a statement. [148919]

Mr Morley *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The Regulations are enforced by the Environment Agency and apply minimum prescriptive standards on a blanket basis to all premises storing oil in above ground fixed or mobile tanks or facilities. There are no plans to change the Agency's approach to enforcement which is explained in the Defra guidance note which accompanied the Regulations. The Legislative background in that Guidance states that the Environment Agency will not need to make a special visit to individual sites to assess risks, but will enforce the regulations during routine visits and thus reduce resource burdens.

Prosecutions

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many prosecutions are pending in the *(a)* Foot and Mouth Department, *(b)* Forestry Commission, *(c)* Environment Agency and *(d)* IACS Payment Department. [148922]

Alun Michael: The information requested is as follows.

(a) None by Defra.

(b) Nine prosecutions are currently listed before the Magistrates Courts.

(c) Three hundred and sixty five prosecutions are currently listed before the Courts (based on information provided by the Environment Agency).

(d) Five prosecutions in relation to cases investigated by the Rural Payments Agency are currently listed before the Courts.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Civil Service (Disablities)

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will set out the number of employees in her Department who have a disability, broken down by disability type. [148984]

Mr. Caborn: Data on disability is collected on the basis of voluntary self-classification. The Department currently employs 12 people declaring a disability. The Department's Code of Practice on Equal Opportunities Monitoring prevents us from disclosing data for individual groups fewer than five. This is also in accordance with exemption 12 of Part 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what financial support her Department provides for the maintenance of historic buildings; what plans she has to increase this support; and if she will make a statement. [149493]

Mr. Caborn: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport's financial support for the maintenance of historic buildings is channelled through English Heritage, which received a baseline grant-in-aid allocation of £115.4 million in 2002–03. English Heritage's baseline grant-in-aid for 2003–04 and 2004–05 is £121.7 million. Funding for English Heritage beyond 2004–05 is currently under consideration.

In addition, Lottery funding is available for repairs to historic buildings through the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has a joint grant scheme with English Heritage for repairs to listed places of worship.

This Department also administers the Treasury's Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which has provided £16.6 million of grants towards the cost of repairs to listed places of worship since December 2001. The Scheme is expected to continue until March 2006.

TRANSPORT

A40 (Cheltenham)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to carry out a review of the new traffic arrangements on the A40 at the Charlton Kings Sixways Junction in Cheltenham; and in what form he would like submissions to the review. [148535]

Mr. Jamieson: The next review of the scheme is due in September 2004. This will be a formal Road Safety Audit. There is no statutory or formal consultation as part of this process but the Highways Agency would welcome feedback from local people about the scheme.

A565

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money Sefton council received on transference of ownership of the A565 from the Highways Agency; and how much it will receive on an annual basis. [148928]

Mr. Jamieson: The Highways Agency has a programme for handing over responsibility (known as detrunking) for the A565 trunk road to Sefton borough council on 1 April 2004. The statutory process to enable detrunking to proceed is currently ongoing, and includes negotiations with the council. A Grant, calculated to be in the region of £600,000, will be awarded based on a formula for maintenance expenditure. This Grant, uprated for inflation, will be paid in the 2004–05 financial year and will continue until detrunked roads are included in the Highways Maintenance Formula Spending Share.

Air Transport

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received from the National Air Traffic Service on the need for them to validate capacity forecasts contained in the White Paper on The Future of Air Transport; [149045]

(2) whether he has commissioned the National Air Traffic Service to validate the capacity forecasts contained in the White Paper on The Future of Air Transport. [149046]

Mr. Darling: National Air Traffic Services responded to the consultation exercises carried out prior to the publication of The Future of Air Transport, but have not made any representations to the Government since the White Paper was published. Air Traffic Management is an essential part of the Aviation White Paper strategy and NATS will have a key role in delivering it.

Car Insurance

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents there were in each region of England in each of the last five years involving a driver or drivers who were uninsured; and what percentage of those accidents involved *(a)* third party personal injury and *(b)* third party property damage. [148739]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 21 January 2004]*: Information on the insurance status of drivers involved in accidents is not held centrally in my department.

However, the Motor Insurers' Bureau (Mffi) holds figures for accident claims in the United Kingdom involving uninsured or untraced drivers. For the past five years, the MIB paid claims as follows:

	£ million
1999	173
2000	213
2001	222
2002	214
2003	235

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the overall cost to public funds in the latest year for which figures are available of driving without adequate insurance cover. [148741]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 21 January 2004]*: Information on the overall cost to public funds of driving without adequate insurance cover is not held centrally.

The main costs of uninsured driving will be the substantial ones arising from accidents involving uninsured drivers. In the public sector these costs will fall on the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance and hospitals). Costs will also fall on the victims, and (through increased insurance premiums) on the honest, insured motorist. The estimated cost to the honest motorists1 insurance premium is an average of £30.

There will also be a cost to the Courts Service arising from the need to prosecute and to enforce fines and penalties.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many members of the Coastguard Service work in Wales; and how many worked in Wales in 1996. [150012]

Mr. Jamieson: The Maritime and Coastguard Agency currently employs 90 Coastguards in Wales. There are also 476 Auxiliary Coastguards based in Wales.

Due to a change in Human Resource systems, there are no exact figures for 1996. However, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency estimates that there were 60 Coastguards and 500 Auxiliary Coastguards in Wales at that time.

Hemsworth Bypass-A1 Link Road

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to *(a)* commence and *(b)* be completed on the link road between the Hemsworth bypass and the A1; how much funding he has made available for this purpose; and if he will make a statement. [149671]

Mr. Jamieson: This scheme is awaiting the completion of the necessary statutory procedures. We confirmed in the 2004–05 Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement, announced last month, that we would provide sufficient resources for completion of the scheme up to a maximum of £11.261 million. However, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council recently notified us of a cost increase of £9.337 million over and above this agreed contribution. I cannot make a decision on the case for additional funding until the statutory procedures have been completed.

Road Network

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of the *(a)* motorway and *(b)* dual carriage network has raised central reservation barriers to eliminate the glare of headlights from oncoming traffic. [149708]

Mr. Jamieson: There are no recorded examples on the English dual carriageway trunk road or motorway network where the central reserve barriers have been raised to eliminate the glare of headlights from oncoming traffic.

A trial of an anti-glare device attached to central reservation barrier has been undertaken on an English motorway but this proved to be ineffective in reducing accidents.

Speed Cameras (Essex)

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer of 6 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 215W, how much of the money raised in fines from speed cameras in Essex was spent in Essex on the costs of purchasing and operating speed cameras for each of the five years prior to 2001–02. [149382]

Mr. Jamieson *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* Before the safety camera netting off trial began in April 2000 money raised in fines was retained by the Treasury and the cost of placing and maintaining cameras met by local authorities. The money claimed back by the Essex Safety Camera Partnership to meet the cost of operating cameras for the financial year of 2000–01 was £1,846,480.

Vale Link Community Transport Scheme

Mr. Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure the long-term future of the Thornbury-based Vale Link Community Transport scheme; and if he will make a statement. [150075]

Mr. McNulty: Vale Link Community Transport was awarded funding of £612,000 from the Department's Rural Bus Challenge (RBC) competition in 1998. The long-term future of the scheme is primarily a matter for the local authority and the other local organisations concerned to consider.

We have taken a number of steps to support community transport schemes. From May 2002 many community transport organisations are eligible to receive Bus Service Operators Grant and I understand Vale Link Community Transport is in receipt of this grant. We have also extended Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, of which South Gloucestershire has been allocated £285,000 this year, to enable authorities to use it for the further support of schemes that have previously received RBC funding. However, it is essentially for individual authorities to decide which services are most appropriate for support in their respective areas.

Waterborne Freight

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to increase the percentage of waterborne freight on UK flagged ships. [149445]

Mr. Jamieson: Freight Facilities Grants are available to encourage the carriage of freight by inland waterways, coastal and short sea shipping. Freight Facilities Grants are non-flag specific.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Child Care

23. **Laura Moffatt:** To ask the Minister for Women what representations she has received on the barriers to women working due to the lack of high-quality child care provision. [149754]

Ms Hewitt: My postbag leaves me in no doubt about how much high quality childcare provision gives real choices to women. This is why I welcome the announcements by the Chancellor in his Pre- Budget Report on record spending on childcare.

Government Departments (Gender Balance)

24. **Tom Brake:** To ask the Minister for Women what recent discussions she has had with ministerial colleagues about gender balance within Government Departments. [149756]

Jacqui Smith: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Women is holding a series of meetings with ministerial colleagues to review progress on gender balance in Government Departments.

Women Entrepreneurs

Siobhain McDonagh: To ask Minister for Women what action she is taking to help women entrepreneurs. [149758]

Ms Hewitt: The Government are now actively implementing the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise which was launched in May last year, to provide a co-ordinated and long-term approach to the development of women's enterprise.

We are now working with many partners nationally and in the regions to take forward the recommendations of the Framework. And we continue to work productively with women's enterprise organisations such as PROWESS and Everywoman.

We are encouraged by the findings on women's enterprise of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's most recent report which finds levels of total female entrepreneurship in the UK having risen from

3.3 per cent. in 2002 to 3.8 per cent. in 2003 and female attitudes to start-up having become far more positive during the last year.

Early reports from the regions suggest levels of women's enterprise are rising; although it is still early days, it encouraging to hear of real progress being made in the north east, East Midlands and the south east.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

12. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on manufacturing industry in England. [149742]

Jacqui Smith: Having put in place the first Government manufacturing strategy for 30 years with the active support of industry and unions, we are making good progress in addressing the key factors for manufacturing success identified in that strategy-promoting investment, applying science and innovation, best practice and skills to achieving more high value manufacturing.

Post Office

13. **Dr. Tonge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the sum allocated for improvements to urban post offices under the urban reinvention programme has been applied for. [149743]

Mr. Timms: To date, my Department has paid £5,448,897 to Post Office Ltd. under the urban reinvention programme for investment grant funding. This includes an element of pre-funding to the company to facilitate prompt payments to sub-postmasters. I understand from Post Office Ltd. that the total number of applications submitted by sub-postmasters so far is 485, with further cases under discussion with individual sub-postmasters. Of these applications, 98 grants, totalling £506,934, had been paid in full as at 20 January 2004.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many sub-postmasters of *(a)* rural and *(b)* urban post offices in each constituency have applied for compensation to close their business; how many have been successful in their application; and how much has been paid to them to date. [147066]

Mr. Timms *[holding answer 12 January 2004]:* Decisions on compensation to sub-postmasters are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. and I have asked the Chief Executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Mr. Jenkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to her answer of 14 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 796W, on benefit payments (pensioners), if she will publish the figures used by the Post Office to justify the proposed closure of *(a)* Belgrave Branch, 326 Wilnecote Lane, Belgrave, Tamworth, *(b)* Dosthill Branch, 49 High Street, Dosthill, Tamworth, *(c)* Kerria Road Branch, Kerria Centre, 34 Kerria Road, Tamworth, *(d)* Hockley Branch, 158 Hockley Road, Wilnecote, Tamworth, *(e)* Kettlebrook Branch, 134 Kettlebrook Road, Tamworth, *(f)* Silver Link Branch, 66 Caledonian, Tamworth, *(g)* Two Gates Branch, 1 Springfield Road, Two Gates, Tamworth and *(i)* Wilnecote Branch, 80 Watling Street, Wilnecote, Tamworth. [149492]

Mr. Timms: Decisions on proposed closures of post offices are an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. (POL). I understand that the figures used by POL in proposing the closure of a post office are commercially confidential.

North Sea Oil

14. **Mr. Blizzard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research her Department has conducted into the use of carbon capture technology to enhance recovery of North sea oil. [149744]

Mr. Timms: The Department has conducted its own research and sponsored research jointly with the oil industry since the mid 1980's into the use of carbon dioxide injection into mature oil fields to recover more oil. We are currently investigating the feasibility of demonstrating the use of carbon dioxide for enhanced oil recovery in the North Sea. We expect to publish the findings of this investigation in March.

Shipbuilding

15. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support she is providing to the shipbuilding industry. [149745]

Jacqui Smith: The Department gave a £2.8 million grant to the Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers Association for a four-year programme of productivity improvements and research and development benefiting shipyards, which concluded on 31 December 2003. Separately, my Department is funding the Science, Engineering and Marine Training Agency (SEMTA) to undertake a range of studies into training needs and provision in the shipbuilding industry, with the aim of ensuring that the UK shipbuilding and marine engineering sector has sufficient numbers of properly skilled people to meet the Ministry of Defence's substantial naval procurement programme.

Electricity Prices

16. **John Thurso:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to facilitate the connection to the national electricity grid at affordable prices of potential consumers living in remote areas. [149746]

Mr. Timms: I have no such plans.

Connections for those in remote areas are generally more difficult and this is, unfortunately, reflected in the cost. There are no provisions in existing legislation which could be used to require the cost of connection to be subsidised by, for example, the existing customer base.

Natural Gas

17. **Andrew Selous:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research her Department has carried out into the availability of natural gas worldwide. [149748]

Mr. Timms: DTI uses information on natural gas availability from a variety of sources including the International Energy Agency, the Energy Information Agency of the US Department of Energy and the BP-Amoco Statistical Digest.

World Trade

18. **Tom Brake:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the Government's policy towards trade negotiations following the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Cancún. [149749]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Her Majesty's Government remains committed to delivering a development Round that will benefit industrialised and developing countries alike.

Financial Services

19. **Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the number of financial services jobs being exported to *(a)* Eastern Europe and *(b)* Asia. [149750]

Ms Hewitt: We do not have official figures for the number of financial services jobs being offshored. We are addressing this issue through seeking views from parties interested in offshoring as part of our consultation exercise. In recognising the economic and social importance of this issue, we are also looking at how we can improve data collection.

Altran Foundation for Innovation

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps she has taken to inform *(a)* schools, *(b)* colleges and *(c)* universities of the Altran Foundation for Innovation's award for 2004 on the theme of Discovery, Understanding and Enjoying Science through innovation. [144502]

Ms Hewitt: I understand that Ecsite-UK, the organisation that represents Science Centres, has details of this award on its websites.

Business Starts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which inter-ministerial group is responsible for the English equivalent of the Scottish Business Birthrate Strategy; and which ministers are members of that group. [149634]

Nigel Griffiths: Responsibility for small business policy, including start-up strategy, is a matter for the Ministerial Committee on Economic Affairs, Productivity and Competitiveness. The members are:

Chancellor of the Exchequer (Chair)

Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State

Secretary of State for the Home Department

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Secretary of State for Transport and Secretary of State for Scotland

Secretary of State for Health

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Secretary of State for Defence

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Leader of the House of Lords and The Lord President of the Council

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury and Chief Whip

Secretary of State for Education and Skills

Chief Secretary, Treasury

Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Privy Seal and Secretary of State for Wales

Minister without Portfolio

Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Minister for State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mike O'Brien)

Business Links

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many businesses have been helped by each of the UK business link organisations; what the average sum of money received by these businesses is; how many of the businesses helped are still operating; and how many of those businesses have increased their profitability. [148190]

Nigel Griffiths: In the last full operating year (2002–03) over 300,000 businesses were helped by Business Link Operators (BLOs) in England. A breakdown of this total–by individual BLO—follows. Information about business survival rates are not collected individually.

BLOs do not report on levels of support funding received by the businesses they assist.

A Gross Value Added measure to enable BLOs to quantify—in terms of wealth creation and productivity improvements—the impact of their support to businesses will be available from 2004.

County Durham—2,834

Northumberland—2,438

Tees Valley—3,718

Tyne and Wear—4,685

Cheshire and Warrington—6,642

Cumbria—4,428

East .Lancashire—3,187

Manchester—11,540

Merseyside—6,286

North and West Lancashire—6,435

North Manchester—5,445

Humberside—8,817

North Yorkshire—9,231

South Yorkshire—5,511

West Yorkshire—12,335

Derbyshire—4,631

Leicestershire—4,409

Lincolnshire and Rutland—4,720

Northamptonshire—3,186

Nottinghamshire—5,592

Birmingham and Solihull—8,149

Black Country—5,365

Coventry and Warwickshire—5,377

Hereford and Worcestershire—8,489

Shropshire—3,074

Staffordshire—6,666
Bedfordshire—2,400
Cambridgeshire—3,223
Essex—8,655
Hertfordshire—7,281
Norfolk—3,981
Suffolk—4,423
London—32,730
Kent—10,465
Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire—10,542
Surrey—12,199
Sussex—9,446
Wessex—15,511
Berkshire—6,827
Devon and Cornwall—9,157
Gloucestershire—4,357
Somerset—3,047
West—7,132
Wiltshire—5,099
Total—309,665

Business Support

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the impact that *(a)* regional venture capital funds have had on (i) the overall productivity of United Kingdom businesses and (ii) reducing disparities in regional productivity, *(b)* Faraday centres have had on enterprise areas, *(c)* University Challenge Seed Funds and *(d)* the SMART scheme. [146147]

Jacqui Smith: The nine regional venture capital funds have only recently become operational. The first funds became operational in January 2002 and the final fund in July 2003. These funds have a 10 to 12 year lifespan and it is, therefore, too early to assess their impact on the areas you have identified. Plans are already in hand, to assess their impact at the appropriate time.

An early evaluation, to measure progress, was concluded in July 2003 and a summary report can be found on the following website address: http://www.sbs.gov.uk/content/finance/SBS_RVCF_Esummary_july2003.pdf

Information and Communications Technology

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the *(a)* actual and *(b)* percentage change in the take-up of connectivity technologies among the UK's micro and small businesses was in each year since 1997; and what steps are being taken to increase take-up. [146133]

Mr. Timms: Measurement of take up of connectivity is covered by the DTIs International Benchmarking Study (IBS). The IBS has been produced annually since 1997 and copies are available from the Libraries of the House.

IBS 2003 shows UK businesses in general have reached saturation point on internet access although there has been a slight falling off in connection by micro and small businesses. A similar situation applies to the use of websites.

The Government will continue to promote the benefits of being connected to the internet for micro and small businesses but emphasis will be placed on encouraging a more effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). Businesses of all sizes need to use ICT in a more sophisticated way, paying due attention to people and processes, as well as the technology, if they are to gain the expected benefits.

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of employees in the information and communication technology sector are women; and what steps are being taken to increase the representation of women in the sector. [146138]

Ms Hewitt: The proportion of women in ITEC occupations across all sectors is currently 23 per cent. (e-skills UK and ONS, Labour Force Survey 2002).

As part of the Government's strategy the DTI announced in December the award of a contract to the JIVE Consortium (Bradford College, Sheffield Hallam University, the Open University and Cambridge University) to operate a new resource centre for women in science, engineering and technology (SET) occupations, which include IT. JIVE will offer advice and support to SET employers about best practice in recruiting and retaining women and also support and advice for women wishing to work in or already working in SET occupations. This strategy is aimed at increasing the representation of women in all SET occupations at all levels, and will include the provision of a dynamic and content-rich website; good practice guides for SET employers; a 'Good SET Employer' recognition for women wishing to return to SET occupations. Working with their Open University partners JIVE are developing specific ideas about increasing the number of women in IT. Bradford College already trains women to be Microsoft professionals and their experience in this field will be invaluable in ensuring that the new resource centre is effective.

Miners' Compensation/Pensions

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many claims there have been for *(a)* chronic pulmonary emphysema and *(b)* vibration white finger in the Easington constituency; how many have been settled; and what amount of compensation has been paid to date. [148852]

Nigel Griffiths: The information is as follows:

	COPD	*VWF*
Claims received (number)	8,098	5,607
Interim payments made (number)	2,012	3,764
Full and final offers made (number)	3,541	2,218
Offers accepted (number)	2,466	1,918
Total amount paid (£ million)	24.4	38.4

Constituency figures can be found on the DTI website: www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth. The information is compiled in the middle of the month and shows the figures for the end of the previous month.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many vibration white finger cases the Government have referred to the Vibration Reference Panel; and on what date the Vibration Reference Panel was set up. [149027]

Nigel Griffiths: Three cases.

The VRP was set up on 1 September 2002.

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how much the Government have charged the *(a)* Miners Pension Scheme and *(b)* British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme for their role as guarantors in each of the last six years; [148939]

(2) how much the Government intend to charge the *(a)* Miners Pension Scheme and *(b)* British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme in April for their role as guarantors. [148938]

Nigel Griffiths: The Government do not charge for providing the guarantee for the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme or the British Coal Superannuation Scheme.

The Government guarantee that members' basic pensions as at the time of privatisation will always rise in line with inflation, irrespective of underlying economic conditions.

Any surpluses from the guaranteed fund are shared between the Government and the schemes.

Procurement (Outsourcing)

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on her Department's procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing; whether her Department is outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies; to which countries her Department has outsourced these jobs; how much her Department has spent on this outsourcing in each of the last two years; and how much has been budgeted for this purpose for the next two years. [147583]

Ms Hewitt: The DTI does not have a specific procurement policy with regard to offshore IT and call centre outsourcing. In all procurements, the DTI always seeks to achieve best value for money, having due regard to propriety, regularity and the European procurement directives.

The DTI is not outsourcing IT and call centre jobs to offshore companies.

Renewable Energy (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list windfarm sites in operation in Cambridgeshire, giving their *(a)* location and *(b)* output in kW hours. [149678]

Mr. Timms: As far as I am aware there are currently only two operational windfarms in Cambridgeshire. These are both single turbine facilities.

A 225 kW turbine operated by Fivestone Ltd. commissioned in September 1990 is located at Kings Bush Farm, London Road, Godmanchester, Huntingdon.

A 225 kW turbine operated by Wood Green Animal Shelters, commissioned in October 1993, is located adjacent to Priory Produce, St. Mary's Road, Ramsey.

Energy output in kWh on a site by site basis cannot be provided due to confidentiality undertakings between the site owners and Ofgem, for sites eligible under the Renewables Obligation.

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of electricity generated in Cambridgeshire was from renewable sources in each of the past five years. [149679]

Mr. Timms: Statistics for electricity generation are not available at county level. This is because such data would disclose information about individual private companies. Out of the 11.4 MWh of electricity generated from renewable sources in 2002, 1.3 MWh (11 per cent.) was generated in the east of England region that includes Cambridgeshire.

Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in (i) her Department and (ii) departmental agencies in the last 12 months. [147907]

Ms Hewitt: 129 staff passes have been reported lost by DTI staff in the past twelve months.

The respective figure for agencies is 75.

Neither DTI nor its agencies hold figures for stolen passes.

Small Business

Mr. Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent assessment she has made of small business failures in the East of England; and if she will make a statement. [149690]

Nigel Griffiths: VAT registrations and de-registrations and insolvency statistics are the best official guide to the number of business success or failures.

There were 17,190 VAT de-registrations during 2002 in the East of England, which was 470 less than those registering for VAT during the same year. There have been more registrations than de-registrations in the East of England each year from 1995 to 2002.

The number of company insolvencies in the East of England area also fell between 1999–2000 and 2002–03. A stable economy with low interest rates has assisted the net growth of business in the East of England.

Mr. Robert Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of Smart Feasibility award winners have failed to launch product or service due to failure to attract investment. [146315]

Nigel Griffiths: The report of the most recent, independent evaluation of the Smart scheme was published in September 2001. It found that 29 per cent. of those businesses which received only a Feasibility

Study award and 19 per cent. of those which received both a Feasibility Study and a Development Project award did not or expected not to introduce a new or improved product or process as a result of the project. Of those businesses, regardless of the outcome of their projects, which found barriers to the introduction of new products or processes to market, 37 per cent. which received only a Feasibility Study award and 31 per cent. which received both a Feasibility Study and a Development Project award cited "lack of finance" as a barrier.

Software Patenting

Mr. Lazarowicz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effect of current EU proposals for software patenting on the small and medium sized enterprise sector. [142016]

Ms Hewitt: The current European Commission proposal for a Directive on the patentability of computer-implemented inventions has been subject to a regulatory impact assessment, which was cleared by the European Scrutiny Committee of the House in its forty-first report of the 2001–02 session.

Although the scope of the assessment is necessarily wider than the SME sector, it does specifically consider the effect of the proposals on small businesses. In particular, it indicates that the proposed Directive would reduce the uncertainty concerning the patentability of computer-implemented inventions and should therefore reduce patenting and legal costs. As these costs and uncertainties are of particular concern to small and medium sized businesses, I believe that a Directive that achieves these aims would have particular benefits for the SME sector.

Mr. Lazarowicz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the policy is of the UK Government regarding the EU proposals for software patenting. [142017]

Ms Hewitt: The Government continue to support the proposal put forward by the European Commission for a Directive on the patentability of computer-implemented inventions that clarifies the existing position and reduces uncertainty in this field. My Department continues to work with interested parties and other member states to achieve a Directive that meets these aims and offers benefits for both software developers and software users in the UK and Europe.

Sustainable Energy Policy Advisory Board

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what remuneration will be provided to each of the members of the new Sustainable Energy Policy Advisory Board. [145685]

Mr. Timms: The Chairman will receive £450 for a full day's meeting or £225 for a half-day meeting. Board members will receive £200 for a full day's meeting or £100 per half-day meeting.

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how often the new Sustainable Energy Policy Advisory Board will meet. [145686]

Mr. Timms: The full Board will meet once a quarter. There may be additional meetings of sub-groups on an ad hoc basis.

Transdepartmental Science and Technology Group

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will break down the Transdepartmental Science and Technology Group administration costs set out in her Departmental Report 2003, for 2003–04; and what amounts were allocated in each year since 1997. [147801]

Ms Hewitt: Allocations of gross administration costs to the Transdepartmental Science and Technology Group (TDST) since 1998–99 are set out in the following table. 1997–98 figures are not available because administration costs were compiled on a different basis before 1998–99.

TDST gross administration costs: allocation an breakdown per year since 1997

£000

	Type of expenditure		
	Pay and pensions	*Current expenditure other than pay*	*Administrator gross total*
1997–98	n/a	n/a	n/a
1998–99	3,665	2,738	6,762
1999–2000	3,431	3,527	7,173
2000–01	3,744	2,516	6,380
2001–02	4,191	3,845	8,171
2002–03	4,279	4,425	8,704
2003–04	4,134	3,816	8,085

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate she has made of the annual economic cost to developing countries of the breakdown of the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Cancún. [149075]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I have no estimate of the annual economic cost to developing countries of the breakdown of the WTO ministerial conference in Cancún. However, there are a number of studies by academics and international organisations of the benefits to developing countries of a successful round of negotiations. The scale of estimated gains depends on a number of factors including the scale of trade liberalisation implemented, its timing and the product coverage. Most recently, a World Bank study ("Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries", 2004) estimated that significant liberalisation could boost developing country incomes by between $159 billion and $349 billion per annum by 2015.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what formal meetings she held at the ministerial conference in Cancún with representatives of developing countries. [149076]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: My ministerial colleagues and I between us talked with Ministers from around 40 developing countries, including many from the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group, in meetings in Cancún. A visit to Honduras with Christian Aid to visit poor

families meant I was in Cancún for the last 48 hours of the conference. In that time, in addition to EU and other meetings, I spoke with six developing country Ministers.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with her EU counterparts since the breakdown of the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Cancún about *(a)* improving processes for decision-making and *(b)* taking account of the views of developing countries. [149110]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government have had various discussion with our EU partners and the European Commission since the WTO Ministerial in Cancún.

My right hon. Friend and I met with my our fellow EU Trade Ministers and the European Commission, on 2 December, to reaffirm our commitment to the current round of negotiations and to send a clear message of the importance of positive and flexible engagement with all WTO members, including taking account of the views of developing countries. We also discussed improvements to the functioning of the WTO, in particular WTO ministerial meetings.

These discussions are reflected in the Commission's strategy paper, "Reviving the DDA Negotiations—the EU perspective", which was endorsed by the European Council of Ministers on 8 December last year.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the progress achieved by World Trade Organisation members in meeting the terms of the Cancún Declaration by 15 December 2003. [149144]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Following the disappointing conclusion to the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún, the Government welcome the fact that all WTO members have committed themselves to re-engaging in the Doha round of trade negotiations. It is vital that all WTO members now turn themselves towards making real and significant progress in implementing the Doha Development Agenda.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* prospective members of the proposed new Armed Forces Pension Scheme and *(b)* beneficiaries of the associated compensation arrangements he estimates will find the provision for them capped by a £1.4 million limitation on the total value of pension and related arrangements. [149153]

Mr. Caplin: The Ministry of Defence expects very few members of the new Armed Forces Pensions Scheme to be affected by the Government's proposed lifetime allowance of £1.4 million. Payments from the new Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are not retirement pensions for taxation purposes and are not therefore affected by the proposed allowance.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the value of the pension provision through the proposed Armed Forces Pension Scheme, capitalised in accordance with the rules proposed by the Treasury, will be for *(a)* a senior warrant officer, *(b)* an officer retiring at normal retirement age at the rank of major or equivalent and *(c)* a four star officer; and if he will make a statement on the assumptions and calculations underlying the valuations. [149154]

Mr. Caplin: The figures are as follows:

	£
4* officer	1,518,000
Major (and equivalent)	493,000
Warrant officer 1 (higher)	418,000

The figures assume broadly mid-point 2003–04 pay rates, 35 years Service (some of which might be after normal pension age of 55) and the new pension scheme provision of a 50 per cent. pension after 35 years' Service. The pensions have been capitalised using the Inland Revenue formula of 20 times pension plus the lump sum, equivalent to three times the pension. Figures are rounded to the nearest £1,000. The formula used to capitalise pensions is subject to public consultation by the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he intends to make in relation to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme and compensation arrangements to ensure that, as the pay rates of the armed forces are increased over time to protect their real value, the full value of pension and compensation arrangements are not restricted by a cap on capitalised value fixed in cash terms. [149155]

Mr. Caplin: The Government propose to increase the proposed lifetime allowance annually by the Retail Prices Index. Like any other employer, the Ministry of Defence will keep this under review.

Conflict Resolution

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what change there will be in his Department's funding for conflict resolution projects over the next five years; [149427]

(2) what assessment he has made of the amount of money spent by other Defence Departments in European countries on conflict resolution projects; [149451]

(3) how much his Department spent on conflict resolution projects in the latest year for which figures are available. [149541]

Mr. Ingram: Ministry of Defence involvement in conflict resolution projects, as opposed to operations, is funded through the programme budgets of the United Kingdom's Global and Africa Conflict Prevention Pools. Pool funding levels for future years will be established during Spending Review 2004.

In Financial Year 2002–03, the Pools funded nearly £41 million of Ministry of Defence support to conflict prevention and conflict resolution projects. Further information on the conflict resolution work of the Ministry of Defence, together with that of the Foreign

and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, can be found in the Global Conflict Prevention Pool booklet, published on 9 September 2003.

The MOD has made no assessment of the amount of money spent by other Defence Departments in European countries on conflict resolution.

Correspondence

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 15 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 657W, on vaccination, when he will write to the hon. Member. [149581]

Mr. Caplin: There has been a delay in this response as I require further information to establish the precise licensing position on all the vaccines and to provide a precise answer. I will do so as soon as I can.

European Defence

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the NATO Secretary General about European defence. [149470]

Mr. Hoon: I had regular discussions with Lord Robertson across a wide range of issues concerning European defence and I look forward to working with the new NATO Secretary General in the same way. There have been no meetings of the NATO Defence Ministers since the beginning of the year, when Mr. de Hoop Scheffer took on his new role, but one is scheduled for early February.

In a telephone conversation on Friday 9 January 2004, I congratulated Mr. de Hoop Scheffer on his appointment and outlined some of the United Kingdom's priorities for NATO including the importance of the European nations' contribution to the Alliance and the NATO/EU relationship.

Falklands War Veterans

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Falklands War veterans were still serving in the *(a)* Army, *(b)* Navy, *(c)* RAF and *(d)* Royal Marines in 2003. [148457]

Mr. Caplin: The matter is being investigated and has taken longer to compile than initially thought. I will write to my hon. Friend when this work is complete and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Fire Service

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost is of modernising the Defence Fire Service to the standard envisaged by Fire Study 2000. [149059]

Mr. Caplin: The recommendations contained in Fire Study 2000 for modernising the organisation of the Defence Fire Service would expect to achieve yearly savings rather than increased expenditure.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to co-ordinate tri-Service civil emergencies fire training. [149061]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence has no plans to co-ordinate tri-Service civil emergencies fire training. Dealing with a civil emergency remains the responsibility of the civil authorities. Any assistance provided by the armed forces in the event of such an emergency would be in support of those authorities and at their specific request. It would most likely take the form of general duties support.

Iraq

Adam Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many international law enforcement officers are stationed in the British zone in Southern Iraq. [141680]

Mr. Ingram: As at 16 January 2004, there were around 645 international law enforcement officers stationed in the British zone in Southern Iraq. This figure includes international civilian police officers, contract police officers and carabinieri who are mandated with civilian policing powers.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost to the Department has been to date in respect of the Iraq conflict; and what the projected costs are for *(a)* 2004, *(b)* 2005 and *(c)* 2006. [148779]

Mr. Ingram: Outturn information for 2002–03 on the cost of operations in Iraq has been published as part of the Ministry of Defence's Annual Report and Accounts. Operating Costs for 2002–03 for operations in Iraq total £629.531 million. Expenditure on capital equipment amounts to £217.680 million. The grand total is, therefore, £847.211 million.

For 2003–04, funding voted at Winter Supplementary Estimates amounted to £1.2 billion and covered the cost of peacekeeping and associated Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs). The MOD will seek a further £300 million at Spring Supplementary Estimates to cover primarily the cost of the Recuperation of my Department's operational capability. Thus, the total sought in 2003–04 will be £1.5 billion.

It is too early to say what costs might be incurred after 2003–04.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his statement of 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 690, on the National Audit Office Report on Operation Telic, when he gave Mrs. Samantha Roberts, a *(a)* summary of the incident in which her husband died and *(b)* ballistics report; when he met Mrs. Roberts; when the Royal Military Police Special Investigation Branch report into Sergeant Roberts' death will be published; and when the Army Board of Inquiry into Sergeant Roberts' death will be convened. [149539]

Mr. Hoon: Mrs. Roberts was provided with a summary of the incident on 18 June 2003 by the Casualty Visiting Officer. A report summary of the weapons test was passed to Mrs. Roberts in December 2003. I met Mrs. Roberts, together with other members of Sergeant Roberts' family, on 15 October 2003 and 19 January 2004.

It is not clear when the Royal Military Police Special Investigation Branch investigation will conclude, but a briefing will be offered to Mrs. Roberts as soon as is

practicable, once the SIB's findings are known. A Board of Inquiry will be convened when the SIB investigation has concluded.

Night Vision Goggles

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) for what reason the pilots of the two helicopters of 849 Naval Air Squadron which collided on 22 March 2003 had not been issued with night vision goggles; [149876]

(2) what the criteria are for the issuing of night vision goggles to Naval Air Squadron personnel; [149877]

(3) if he will list the equipment available to Naval Air Squadron helicopter pilots, other than night vision goggles, to prevent collision in poor flying conditions at low altitude at night; [149879]

(4) if he will make it his policy that night vision goggles will be issued to helicopter pilots before night-time missions. [149880]

Mr. Ingram: Night vision goggles (NVG) can be operated only in aircraft that have been specifically modified for this role. Naval helicopters are fitted to allow operation with NVG according to their tactical role in operations. The operational role for the helicopters of 849 Naval Air Squadron involved in Operation TELIC did not require the modifications to the helicopters that are necessary for the provision of NVG.

For RN helicopters, safety is provided by operating procedures such as, air traffic control awareness of hazards through radar detection, communications, lighting and lookout. NVG can, in certain circumstances, enhance these capabilities. But ships operating NVG aircraft need to be compatible. Darkening a ship to allow aircraft NVG operations brings its own safety issues.

Policy for a fleet-wide night vision capability is currently under consideration.

Non-British Naval Ships (UK Waters)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 8 December 2003, *Official Report*, column 278W, if he will make a statement on co-ordination between external security measures taken by the UK and on-board security measures taken by a visiting nation during the docking of non-British naval ships in UK waters. [148966]

Mr. Ingram: External and on-board security measures put in place during the docking of a non-British naval ship in the United Kingdom waters are closely coordinated between the relevant UK authority and the visiting nation. Jurisdiction, however, is clearly delineated, with the visiting ships' Commanding Officer responsible for security within the confines of the ship while external security measures rest with the local police authority or the Naval Base Commander for visits to a Naval Base.

Oath of Allegiance

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans the Government have to change the requirement that members of the armed forces take an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, her heirs and successors. [148930]

Mr. Ingram: None.

Port Facilities (Iberian Peninsula)

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what preference is given to the use of port facilities at Gibraltar over those at other Iberian ports where Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary or other vessels owned or chartered by his Department transit the Straits of Gibraltar or operate in, or transit, nearby waters. [148958]

Mr. Ingram: The goodwill generated from visiting foreign ports makes a significant contribution to Defence Diplomacy, the continuing development of bilateral relations and support to the United Kingdom Industry. A balanced approach is, therefore, taken to ensure that Gibraltar and other ports in the region, including those of other Iberian states, are visited on a regular basis. In addition, ships en route to or returning from deployments east of Suez and Atlantic Patrol Tasks are routinely programmed to visit Gibraltar.

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each *(a)* Royal Navy, *(b)* Royal Fleet Auxiliary and *(c)* other vessels owned or chartered by his Department which has visited (i) Gibraltar and (ii) other Iberian ports in the last year; and what the (A) date, (B) length and (C) location of each visit was. [148959]

Mr. Ingram: The following tables lists visits by Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Ministry of Defence-owned or chartered vessels to Gibraltar and other Iberian ports over the 2003 calendar year.

Visits to Gibraltar by RN, RFA and MOD-owned/chartered vessels during 2003

Ship	*Arrival*	*Departure*
RFA Orangeleaf	13 January	13 January
RFA Orangeleaf	24 January	31 March
MV Laine	28 January	28 January
HMS Westminster	31 January	1 February
MV Ulusoy-4	1 February	2 February
HMS Westminster	5 February	6 February
MV Pancaldo	11 February	11 February
HMS Richmond	14 February	17 February
MV Strada Gigante	15 February	15 February
HMS Westminster	18 February	21 March
MV Dart-9	26 February	27 February
HMS Westminster	28 February	3 March
MV Southern Trader	2 March	2 March
MV Ulusoy-5	5March	5March
HMS Westminster	7March	10 March
MV Germania	3 April	3 April
MV Kapitan Burhanettin Isim	7 April	7 April
HMS Turbulent	7 April	12 April
MV Arroyofrio Uno	11 April	11 April
Mv Tychy	27 April	27 April
RFA Fort Victoria	2 May	5 May
RFA Fort Victoria	6 May	8 May
HMS Scott	10 May	10 May
MV Valibur	11 May	11 May
RFA Gold Rover	16 May	17 May
MV Pacific Winner	18 May	18 May
NAV Kinterbury	18 May	18 May
RFA Argus	20 May	24 May
HMS Ocean	21 May	24 May
HMS Edinburgh	24 May	24 May
HMS Westminster	5 June	6 June
HMS Westminster	6 June	7 June
HMS Westminster	11 June	12 June

Visits to Gibraltar by RN, RFA and MOD-owned/chartered vessels during 2003

Ship	*Arrival*	*Departure*
HMS Sutherland	13 June	14 June
MV Arroyofrio Uno	18 June	18 June
HMS Chiddingfold	27 June	3 June
RFA Orangeleaf	4 July	7 July
HMS Cornwall	12 July	13 July
HMS Grimsby	24 July	28 July
HMS Ledbury	24 July	28 July
HMS Ramsey	24 July	28 July
HMS Shoreham	24 July	28 July
RFA Sir Tristram	24 July	28 July
RFA Orangeleaf	25 July	28 July
HMS Richmond	26 July	27 July
HMS Marlborough	3 August	4 August
MV Arroyofrio Uno	11 August	11 August
MV Dart-8	24 August	24 August
HMS Northumberland	3 September	4 September
MV Dart-10	15 September	15 September
HMS Marlborough	20 September	22 September
HMS Marlborough	26 September	27 September
HMS Campbeltown	7 October	8 October

Visits to Gibraltar by RN, RFA and MOD-owned/chartered vessels during 2003

Ship	*Arrival*	*Departure*
RFA Orangeleaf	8 October	8 October
HMS Turbulent	9 October	15 October
HMS York	11 October	13 October
RFA Orangeleaf	14 October	15 October
HMS Cornwall	17 October	19 October
HMS Norfolk	19 October	21 October
HMS Gloucester	26 October	28 October
MV Anvil Point	3 November	8 November
RFA Brambleleaf	14 November	20 November
HMS St. Albans	14 November	17 November
HMS Scott	19 November	24 November
MV Eddystone	21 November	22 November
MV Hurst Point	23 November	23 November
RFA Orangeleaf	28 November	1 December
HMS Richmond	29 November	1 December
MV Hurst Point	4 December	7 December
HMS Lindisfarne	5 December	10 December
HMS Richmond	5 December	5 December
HMS Kent	12 December	15 December
RFA Orangeleaf	12 December	14 December
HMS Portland	13 December	13 December

Visits to Spanish Ports by RN, RFA and MOD-owned/chartered vessels during 2003

Port	*Ship*	*Arrival*	*Departure*
Las Palmas	MV Hartland Point	5 January	31 January
Algeciras	RFA Brambleleaf	9 January	12 January
Alicante	RFA Brambleleaf	13 January	13 January
Algeciras	RFA Oakleaf	16 January	20 January
Alicante	RFA Brambleleaf	24 January	25 January
Palma, Mallorca	HMS Grimsby	31 January	3 February
Palma, Mallorca	HMS Ledbury	31 January	3 February
Rota	HMS Cornwall	17 March	20 March
Rota	HMS Cornwall	20 March	21 March
Rota	HMS Cornwall	21 March	26 March
Alicante	HMS Cardiff	24 March	29 March
EL Ferrol	RFA Wave Knight	7 April	9 April
Palma, Mallorca	HMS Ark Royal	29 April	5 May
Palma, Mallorca	HMS York	29 April	5 May
Rota	HMS Northumberland	1 May	2 May
Cartagena	HMS Northumberland	4 May	7 May
Ibiza	HMS Blyth	8 May	11 May
Ibiza	HMS Brocklesby	8 May	11 May
Palma	HMS Northumberland	12 May	14 May
Rota	HMS Ark Royal	13 May	13 May
Villagarcia De Arosa	HMS Blyth	15 May	17 May
Villagarcia De Arosa	HMS Brocklesby	15 May	17 May
Barcelona	RFA Fort Austin	20 May	23 May
Palma, Mallorca	HMS Roebuck	30 May	3 June
Alicante	HMS Northumberland	2 June	3 June
Alicante	HMS Northumberland	3 June	5 June
Alicante	HMS Northumberland	5 June	9 June
Palma, Mallorca	HMS Bangor	7 June	11 June
Palma, Mallorca	HMS Sandown	7 June	11 June
Rota	HMS Kent	9 June	10 June
La Coruna	HMS Bangor	16 June	17 June
La Coruna	HMS Sandown	16 June	17 June
Rota	HMS Kent	19 June	20 June
Barcelona	HMS Chatham	25 July	29 July
Cadiz	RFA Sir Galahad	29 July	1 August
Malaga	RFA Grey Rover	31 July	4 August
Malaga	HMS Liverpool	31 July	4 August
Algeciras	RFA Orangeleaf	13 August	14 August
Las Palmas	RFA Fort Victoria	1 October	5 October
Santa Crúz	HMS Invincible	1 October	5 October

Visits to Spanish Ports by RN, RFA and MOD-owned/chartered vessels during 2003

Port	Ship	Arrival	Departure
Rota	HMS Somerset	11 October	14 October
Barcelona	HMS Portland	29 October	3 November
Barcelona	HMS Sutherland	23 November	26 November
Las Palmas	RFA Fort George	29 November	2 December
La Coruna	HMS Pembroke	11 December	14 December

Visits to Portuguese Ports by RN, RFA and MOD chartered vessels during 2003

Port	Ship	Arrival	Departure
Lisbon	HMS Grimsby	24 January	27 January
Lisbon	HMS Ledbury	24 January	27 January
Lisbon	HMS Cumberland	9 February	11 February
Lisbon	HMS Ramsey	1 April	2 April
Lisbon	HMS Shoreham	1 April	2 April
Pontadelgada	HMS Scott	24 July	24 July
Porto	HMS Grimsby	30 July	30 July
Porto	HMS Shoreham	30 July	30 July
Porto	HMS Ledbury	30 July	30 July
Porto	HMS Ramsey	30 July	30 July
Lisbon	HMS Chatham	1 August	5 August
Oporto	HMS Marlborough	29 September	1 October
Lisbon	HSM Glasgow	10 November	10 November
Lisbon	HMS Monmouth	13 November	18 November
Lisbon	HMS York	29 November	1 December
Lisbon	HMS Albion	4 December	8 December

Territorial Army

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how compulsory mobilisation of the Territorial Army in Operation Telic affects the continuity of Service calculations for the *(a)* Territorial Decoration and *(b)* other longer Service awards. [149280]

Mr. Caplin: The Territorial Decoration (TD) was replaced by the Volunteer Reserves Service Medal (VRSM) in 1999, although those members of the Territorial Army (TA) who had already completed a significant period of Service towards the award, can still receive the TD.

Periods of compulsory mobilisation by TA personnel on Operation Telic will count towards the TD, the VRSM or the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how compulsory mobilisation of the Territorial Army affects eligibility for annual training bounty; [149281]

(2) whether the Territorial Army's annual training bounty is payable in the respect of compulsory mobilisation service. [149282]

Mr. Caplin: While compulsory mobilisation does not in itself qualify members of the Territorial Army for their annual training bounty, certain aspects of that service can contribute towards the award. For example, mobilised service in theatre can be considered as meeting the requirement for a 15-day camp (or training in lieu).

Unexploded Ordnance

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 683W, on unexploded cluster bombs, if he will list each case for which compensation has been paid, to the victims of British cluster bombs in *(a)* Kosovo, *(b)* Afghanistan and *(c)* Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [149619]

Mr. Ingram: The Ministry of Defence has no record of compensation payments being made to victims of British cluster bombs in Kosovo, Afghanistan or Iraq.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Colombia

Mr. Iain Luke: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps the Government are taking to ensure that *(a)* UK and *(b)* EU aid to Colombia is not used in a way contrary to UN recommendations on human rights. [146755]

Mr. Gareth Thomas: I refer my hon. Friend to the response given by the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Ayr on Thursday, 26 June 2003 *Official Report*, column. 941W.

DFID's one remaining government-to-government bilateral project in Colombia has now ended, This provided advice on improving the exchange of information between Non-Governmental Organisations working in agriculture. The project was consistent with the UN human rights recommendations.

Africa Peer Review Mechanism

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development when he will report on the outcome of the technical reviews of economic governance carried out as part of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism. [149978]

Hilary Benn: The Africa Peer Review Mechanism is a voluntary process. Work by the Peer Review Secretariat and others involved in the technical assessment is ongoing. We will learn more about progress when the results of the first Peer Review have been published.

Sixteen countries have signed up for the Africa Peer Review Mechanism. There is no confirmation yet as to which country will be first, although it has been proposed that Ghana and South Africa may be among the first wave. Currently it appears unlikely that the technical assessments will be published separately, but as part of the overall report on each country. The reports will all be published by the NEPAD secretariat.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the *(a)* resources available to and *(b)* effectiveness of the African Union presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [149187]

Hilary Benn: I understand that the African Union is currently represented at an administrative level only in the DRC. At the present time it does not appear to have a significant profile in Kinshasa on DRC issues.

Debt Relief

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what consideration is given to levels of HIV infection when approving a country for Heavily Indebted Poor Country debt relief. [149426]

Hilary Benn: The amount of debt relief a country receives under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative is determined by its Debt Sustainability Analysis. A country's debt is compared with its export earnings and government revenue, and relief is provided either to bring the debt to export ratio down to 150 per cent., or the debt to government revenue ratio down to 250 per cent, whichever gives the greater amount of relief. This framework is straightforward and transparent. It also captures all of the factors that could affect a country's ability to service its debt, including levels of HIV infection, as these will affect the export and government revenue figures. Additional relief—or 'topping up'—can also be provided at Completion Point, for those countries that, as a result of exogenous shocks, risk exiting the Initiative with debts above the HIPC sustainability threshold.

Levels of HIV infection are also addressed directly through the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which are a requirement for receiving HIPC debt relief. Governments in HIPC countries lead national processes to develop PRSPs. These strategies set out national priorities and include an estimate of the cost of reaching medium-term development targets. The planned use of HIPC debt relief, along with all other forms of assistance for addressing social problems, such as HIV/AIDS, are addressed in these strategies. For many HIPC countries, analysis of poverty trends in PRSPs shows HIV/AIDS is an important factor, and public action plans can be costed within national spending plans. In this way, savings made under the HIPC Initiative are channelled directly towards tackling this issue.

Ethiopia

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the extent of the food shortage in Ethiopia *(a)* in absolute terms and *(b)* by comparison with December 2002; and what measures are being taken to improve the situation. [148090]

Hilary Benn: In December 2003, the Government of Ethiopia appealed for food assistance for 7.2 million people, amounting to 964,690 metric tonnes of cereal. This is a 45 per cent. reduction from the 13.2 million people requiring relief in December 2002.

However, there is unlikely to be any overall shortage of food in Ethiopia during 2004. Some five to six million people require assistance every year even without shocks such as drought. For this group, we are working with Government to develop a safety net that will provide timely and sufficient resources to not only save lives but help people become more productive.

We also work with Government and others to promote long-term development and sustainably reduce vulnerability to shock. For example, we are expanding local level roads to improve access to markets and supporting the development of vulnerable groups such as pastoralists.

Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the *(a)* nature and *(b)* cost is of his Department's support for the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation. [148556]

Hilary Benn: DFID provides financial support to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations (GAVI) and works closely with the partnership to further its objectives. The UK was on the Board of GAVI for two years to July 2003. We remain engaged with GAVI work on the evaluation of its support to country health systems, on the introduction of new vaccines, and on initiatives to overcome health system barriers to increasing immunisation. DFID has supported GAVI since its inception, initially with a grant of £3 million and then a grant of £35 million over five years (2001–05).

Millennium Development Goals

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the percentage change was between 1990 and 2003 in the numbers of underweight children under five years of age in each country covered by the millennium development goals. [149065]

Hilary Benn: The information readily accessible refers to the percentage of children in developing countries aged under five who are seriously underweight. The data are not collected on an annual basis and very few countries have data more recent than 2000. The table sets out the information on the prevalence of child malnutrition by country for the year which most closely approximates to 1990 and 2000[1]. Where the reference year is different from these two dates this is specified. The final column sets out the difference in percentage points between the two statistics.

[1] Countries without any internationally comparable data have been excluded from the table.

Percentage of underweight children (weight for age)

Country	*1990*	*Year*	*2000*	*Year*	*Change over period where appropriate (percentage points)*
Afghanistan	[1]—		49	1997	
Albania	8	1998	14		-6
Algeria	9	1992	6		3
Angola	[1]—		41	1996	
Argentine Republic	2	1994	5	1996	-3
Armenia	3	1998	3		0
Azerbaijan	10	1996	17		-7
Bangladesh	66		48		18
Belize	6	1992	[1]—		
Benin	29	1996	23	2001	6
Bhutan	[1]—		19	1999	
Bolivia	11		8	1998	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	[1]—		4		
Botswana	17	1996	13		4
Brazil	[1]—		6	1996	
Burkina Faso	33	1993	34	1999	-1

Percentage of underweight children (weight for age)

Country	1990	Year	2000	Year	Change over period where appropriate (percentage points)
Burma	32		43	1995	-11
Burundi	[1]		45		
Cambodia	47	1996	45		2
Cameroon	15	1991	22	1998	-7
Cape Verde	14	1994	[1]		
Central African Republic	23	1995	[1]		
Chad	39	1997	28		11
Chile	2	1993	1	1999	1
China	17	1992	10		7
Colombia	8	1995	7		1
Comoros	19	1992	25		-6
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	34	95	[1]		
Costa Rica	3		5	1996	-2
Cote d'Ivoire	24	1994	21	1999	3
Croatia	1	1994	1	1996	0
Czech Republic	1	1991	[1]		
Djibouti	[1]		18	1996	
Dominican Republic	10	1991	5		5
Ecuador	[1]		14	1998	
Egypt	10		4		6
El Salvador	11	1993	2	1998	-1
Equatorial Guinea	[1]		[1]		
Eritrea	41	1993	44	1995	-3
Estonia	[1]		[1]		
Ethiopia	48	1992	47		1
Fiji	8	1993	[1]		
Gabon	[1]		12		
Gambia	26	1996	17		9
Georgia	[1]		3	1999	
Ghana	27	1994	25	1999	2
Guatemala	27	1995	24	1999	3
Guinea	23	1999	33		-10
Guinea-Bissau	[1]		25		
Guyana	18	1993	12	1997	6
Haiti	27		17		10
Honduras	18	1992	17	2001	1
India	64		53	1993	11
Indonesia	34	1995	25		9
Iran	16	1995	11	1998	5
Iraq	12	1991	[1]		
Jamaica	5	1991	4	1999	1
Jordan	6		5	1997	1
Kazakhstan	8	1995	4	1999	4
Kenya	23	1993	22	1998	1
Korea Dem. Rep. (North)	[1]		28		
Kuwait	[1]		2	1997	
Kyrgyzstan	[1]		11	1997	
Laos	44	1993	40		4
Lebanon	[1]		3	1996	
Lesotho	16	1992	18		-2
Libya	5	1995	[1]		
Macedonia (FYR of)	[1]		6	1999	
Madagascar	41	1992	40	1997	1
Malawi	28	1992	25		3
Malaysia	25		20	1995	5
Maldives	39	1994	43	1995	-4
Mali	[1]		27	1996	
Mauritania	48	1991	32		16
Mauritius	15	1995	[1]		
Mexico	17	1996	8	1999	9
Mongolia	12	1992	13	1999	-1
Morocco	10	1992	[1]		
Mozambique	27	1995	26	1997	1
Namibia	26	1992	[1]		
Nepal	49	1995	48	2001	1
Nicaragua	11	1993	12	1998	-1
Niger	43	1992	40		3
Nigeria	35		31	1999	4
Oman	24	1991	23	1995	1
Pakistan	40	1991	38	1995	2
Panama	6	1992	8	1997	-2
Paraguay	4		[1]		
Peru	11	1992	7		4
Philippines	34		32	1998	2
Qatar	6	1995	[1]		
Romania	6	1991	[1]		
Russian Federation	4	1993	3	1995	1
Rwanda	29	1992	24		5
Senegal	22	1992	18		4
Serbia and Montenegro	2	1996	2		0
Sierra Leone	29		27		2
Solomon Islands	[1]		21	1997	
Somalia	[1]		26		
South Africa	9	1995	[1]		
Sri Lanka	38	1993	33		5
St. Vincent and Grenadines	[1]		20	1996	
Sudan	34	1993	11		23
Swaziland	[1]		10		
Syria	12	1993	13	1995	-1
Tanzania	29	1992	29	1999	0
Thailand	19	1993	18	1995	1
Togo	19	1996	25	1998	-6
Tunisia	9	1995	4		5
Turkey	10	1993	8	1998	2
Turkmenistan	[1]		12		
Uganda	26	1995	23		3
Ukraine	[1]		3		
United Arab Emirates	[1]		7	1996	
Uruguay	4	1993	[1]		
Uzbekistan	[1]		19	1996	
Venezuela	8		4		4
Vietnam	41	1993	34		7
West Bank and Gaza	15	1995	[1]		
Yemen	30	1992	46	1997	-16
Zambia	25	1992	24	1997	1
Zimbabwe	16	1994	13	1999	3

[1] Not available

Note:

Weight for age malnutrition is defined as the percentage of children under five whose weight for age are significantly below (in precise terms minus two standard deviations) the median for the international reference population of the same age group.

Source:

Statistics on International Development 2003

Security Passes

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many security passes have been reported *(a)* lost and *(b)* stolen by staff in his Department in the last 12 months. [147980]

Hilary Benn: Staff in my department have reported losing 39 staff security passes during 2003. In addition a further four have been reported lost as a result of burglaries and theft of handbags and jackets outside of the office.

St. Helena (Airport)

Mr. MacDougall: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on constructing an airport on St. Helena. [150097]

Hilary Benn: The response to an international invitation, which had sought outline proposals for private sector participation and investment in possible development of air access, is being considered in consultation with the St Helena Government. An expert assessment of four expressions of interest in the possible venture was received last month. As the next step, we shall soon decide whether any or all of the existing proposals offer a suitable basis for proceeding further.

World Trade Organisation

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with the Director General of the World Trade Organisation since 15 December 2003. [149069]

Hilary Benn: I have had no discussions with the WTO Director General, though the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has.

Transport Infrastructure Projects

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the five largest major or national transport infrastructure projects which his Department is funding are. [149169]

Hilary Benn: The five largest major transport and infrastructure projects which my Department is funding are listed as follows:

Project title	*Country*	*Value (£ million)*	*Purpose*
Rural Access Programme	Nepal	33	To improve poor people's access to the goods and services that they value in targeted hill areas through an improvement in basic transport, an increase in access for rural populations and the development of a strategy for the future organisation of infrastructure development in these areas.
Support to Rural Feeder Roads	Ghana	27	To improve access to services and markets in rural areas resulting from development of a sustainable rural road network.
Bhairab bridge	Bangladesh	22	To facilitate accelerated economic growth and reduced poverty in North East Bangladesh by the construction of a 4 lane road bridge over the Meghna river.
Institutional Dev Comp of Road Rehabilitation II & III	Bangladesh	19	To reduce the total cost of road transport by improving the road network through more effective design and construction of roads and more effective programming and implementation of road maintenance and improvement of operations of the Road Highways Department.
Rural Transport Project Phase II	Vietnam	19	To ensure an increased flow of people, goods and services in rural Vietnam by improving basic access for rural areas and providing a strategy for sustainable maintenance of rural roads nation wide

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Classroom Assistants

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many classroom assistants were employed in schools in Warrington North *(a)* in 1997 and *(b)* at the last date for which figures are available. [148255]

Mr. Miliband: The full-time equivalent number of teaching assistants[1] in maintained schools is recorded in January of each year on the Annual School Census. In Warrington, North constituency there were 120 teaching assistants in maintained schools in 1997 and 230 in 2003.

[1] Includes teaching assistants, nursery assistants in nursery schools, special needs support staff and minority ethnic pupil support staff.

Higher Education Funding

Mr. Keith Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what (1) *(a)* proportion and *(b)* type of courses in higher education are subject to variable fees; [149432]

(2) what proportion of courses in colleges of further education are subject to variable fees. [149433]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* Fees for post graduate, part-time and overseas students in higher education are currently unregulated. Such students make up around 50 per cent. of the total. Fees for full-time undergraduates are currently set at a standard rate of £1,125 per year (for 2003–04): the Higher Education Bill contains provisions to allow higher education institutions and further education colleges that provide higher education to vary their fees for these students up to a maximum of £3,000, provided they have an access agreement approved by the Office for Fair Access.

Approximately 80 per cent., of further education provision for adults is subject to variable fees. Public funding through the Learning and Skills Council assumes a learner or employer contribution of 25 per cent. to the basic cost of the course. However, colleges are free to vary the fee charged between 0 per cent. and 75 per cent. of the basic cost. No fees may be charged for the 20 per cent. of provision not subject to variable fees. This comprises provision for adult learners on income based benefits and literacy and numeracy courses.

School Fruit Scheme

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills which of the 50 most deprived council wards have schools taking part in the National School Fruit Scheme. [146014]

Miss Melanie Johnson: I have been asked to reply.

All local education authority schools with children aged four to nine years in four of the nine Government Regions had been invited to join the National School Fruit Scheme.

The information requested is shown in the table.

Ward	Local authority	Index of multiple deprivation score	Rank of index of multiple deprivation	Taking part in NSFS/date expected to join
Benchill	Manchester	83.77	1	Yes
Speke	Liverpool	83.13	2	Yes
Thorntree	Middlesbrough	82.52	3	March 2004
Everton	Liverpool	82.10	4	Yes
Pallister	Middlesbrough	81.76	5	March 2004
Vauxhall	Liverpool	81.47	6	Yes
St. Hilda's	Middlesbrough	81.28	7	March 2004
Princess	Knowsley	80.80	8	Yes
Grangetown	Redcar and Cleveland	80.38	9	March 2004
Granby	Liverpool	79.83	10	Yes
Pirrie	Liverpool	79.74	11	Yes
Breckfield	Liverpool	79.71	12	Yes
Longview	Knowsley	79.65	13	Yes
Cherryfield	Knowsley	79.64	14	Yes
Portrack and Tilery	Stockton-on-Tees	78.41	15	March 2004
Harpurhey	Manchester	78.28	16	Yes
Beswick and Clayton	Manchester	77.58	17	Yes
Kirkby Central	Knowsley	77.37	18	Yes
Regent	Great Yarmouth	77.30	19	Autumn 2004
Northwood	Knowsley	77.26	20	Yes
Eden Hill	Easington	76.99	21	Autumn 2004
Bradford	Manchester	76.63	22	Yes
Bidston	Wirral	76.23	23	Yes
Melrose	Liverpool	76.21	24	Yes
Owton	Hartlepool	76.01	25	Yes
Clubmoor	Liverpool	75.99	26	Yes
Aston	Birmingham	75.96	27	Yes
Smithdown	Liverpool	75.81	28	Yes
Ardwick	Manchester	75.73	29	Yes
Walker	Newcastle upon Tyne	75.57	30	March 2004
Monkchester	Newcastle upon Tyne	75.37	31	March 2004
Park End	Middlesbrough	75.31	32	March 2004
Sparkbrook	Birmingham	75.15	33	Yes
Dovecot	Liverpool	75.15	34	Yes
Ordnance	Newham	75.06	35	Yes
Elswick	Newcastle upon Tyne	74.59	36	March 2004
Nelson	Great Yarmouth	74.33	37	Autumn 2004
Cantril Farm	Knowsley	74.33	38	Yes
Whitefield	Pendle	73.93	39	Yes
West City	Newcastle upon Tyne	73.92	40	March 2004
Central	Manchester	73.75	41	Yes
Little Norton	Bradford	73.48	42	Yes
Southey Green	Sheffield	73.36	43	Autumn 2004
Netherley	Liverpool	73.27	44	Yes
Newton Heath	Manchester	73.13	45	Yes
Spitalfields	Tower Hamlets	73.11	46	Yes
Lansbury	Tower Hamlets	73.08	47	Yes
Kensington	Liverpool	73.05	48	YES
Weavers	Tower Hamlets	73.03	49	Yes
Noddle Hill	Kingston upon Hull, City of	72.91	50	Autumn 2004

School Meals

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much was spent on school meals per head by each local education authority in the last year for which figures are available. [147247]

Mr. Miliband: My Department does not collect this information from schools or local education authorities.

Higher Education Funding

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on what amount of debt he has based his estimate of the length of time it will take the average graduate to complete graduate repayments after 2010; and what the change would be in this time if the annual income threshold for repayment was raised to *(a)* £18,000 and *(b)* £20,000. [147769]

Alan Johnson *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* The estimate of the length of time to repay is the average across all students who take out a loan. This is different from the length of time it will take for some notional average graduate to repay. The estimate is from a model which simulates student loan repayments, based on assumed distributions of: length of time in Higher Education; size of means-tested loan taken out; size of fee loan, net of any fee remission; and borrower lifetime earnings. Some borrowers will repay more quickly than this estimated average and some less so.

As part of a package of reforms announced with the introduction of the Higher Education Bill, any debt outstanding after 25 years would be written-off. The threshold would increase to £15,000 in April 2005 and be increased with inflation from April 2010 onwards. The average time to repay would be around 13 years.

Under the same approach to uprating the threshold, the average time to repay would be around 15 years with an £18,000 threshold and around 16 years with a £20,000 threshold.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will estimate the additional cost to the Student Loans Company of administering student loans if top-up fees are introduced; and if he will make a statement. [148265]

Alan Johnson: The introduction of deferred fee loans will have a small effect on the Inland Revenue and the Student Loans Company. Any extra costs will be largely a function of the numbers of graduates repaying loans after 2010. There is also the need to monitor what fees a student is incurring for what courses. There will be one-off development costs to the SLC of introducing the change. DfES would meet the cost. No figures are yet available. Information on the proposals is set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), copies of which are in the House Libraries.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Crime Victims (Compensation)

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his policy is on compensation for victims of crime where the perpetrator of the crime is a member of the same household as the victim. [149204]

Mr. Spellar: The Chief Executive of the Compensation Agency has written to the hon. Gentleman. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

Minority Liaison Officers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many minority liaison officers working with victims of crime are employed by the police and other institutions and agencies in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. [149231]

Mr. Spellar: The Police Service of Northern Ireland has an appointed Minority Liaison Officer in each of the 29 police districts established under the Racial Monitoring programme in 1997.

Other criminal justice agencies do not appoint Minority Liaison Officers, but continue to offer support to victims of crime within the criminal justice system. Support may include the provision of interpreters when required and special measures as provided for by the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

Moylinn GP Co-operative

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in identifying a new location for the Moylinn GP Co-operative. [148771]

Angela Smith: The Southern Health and Social Services Board (SHSSB) and the Association of Southern Areas Doctors On Call (ASADOC) have continued to work together and good progress has been made in identifying a new location for Moylinn Medical Centre. It is expected that an announcement on the outcome of these discussions will be made shortly.

Police Service

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Police Service of Northern Ireland officers have been involved in policing operations outside Northern Ireland in each year since its formation; what the nature of the operations involved was; and how long each operation lasted. [142677]

Jane Kennedy: The information is not readily available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The table sets out the number of officers seconded outside Northern Ireland since 3 November 2001.

	Secondment to national police training	*Overseas Service*
2001	0	14
2002	9	44
2003	4	4
Total	13	62

The PSNI have deployed officers to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor and Iraq. Officers deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina were seconded to the International Police Task force (IPTF). The role of the IPTF is to monitor, advise and train police officers belonging to the Republic Srpska and Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina police forces. A similar monitoring role was undertaken by officers deployed to East Timor.

Officers deployed to Kosovo are seconded to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The role of UNMIK is to maintain civil laws and orders with executive police powers. Officers perform border police duties at international border crossings also advise and assist in maintenance of public security and order.

A senior officer of the PSNI was deployed to Iraq to build capacity and oversee the implementation of the Iraqi national policy strategy and maintain and supervise a regional police training academy.

Polling Stations

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement on the difficulties experienced in ensuring that enough staff were available at polling stations during the Assembly elections in November 2003; [149613]

(2) what plans he has to ensure that greater numbers of individuals will be available to staff polling stations at future elections. [148820]

Mr. Spellar: Difficulties were experienced in the recruitment of polling station staff for the recent Assembly elections. These difficulties arose in part because of the time of year. However, due to the efforts of the Electoral Office, which included using civil servants as polling station staff, it was possible to fill all positions and enable the elections to be conducted successfully.

The administration of elections is a matter for the Chief Electoral Officer. However, the Government will continue to work closely with the CEO in his planning to ensure that polling stations are correctly staffed.

Race Hate Crime

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to address race hate crime in Northern Ireland. [149234]

Mr. Spellar: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has a Community Safety Strategy in place through which it can take action against perpetrators of racial harassment and intimidation. Until recently such action, which normally would have entailed steps to repossess property, was only possible in situations where the perpetrator was a Housing Executive tenant. With the introduction of the Housing (NI) Order 2003, the Housing Executive now has enhanced powers not only in terms of the action it can take against Housing Executive tenants but also through the use of injunctions to address race hate crimes occurring within its estates irrespective of the tenure of the perpetrator. The Housing Executive also assists victims of racial attacks through the provision of temporary accommodation pending enquiries into the circumstances pertaining to any individual case and permanent rehousing, where appropriate. It will also take measures to protect the properties and belongings of victims, if requested to do so.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests for assistance from victims of race hate crime were received in the last 12 months by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; how many victims were rehoused; and what instructions have been circulated to local offices. [149240]

Mr. Spellar: During the 12-month period from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003 a total of 30 cases from ethnic minority backgrounds presented to the Housing Executive as homeless on grounds of intimidation. Of the 30 cases, 17 were accepted as homeless as a result of intimidation and eligible for housing assistance. The remaining 13 applicants either abandoned their application or were ineligible for assistance under immigration or homeless legislation. While no specific guidance has been issued to staff in respect of racial discrimination, they have been provided with written guidance and training to deal with housing and homeless applications to ensure that all incidents, whether racial, terrorist or sectarian intimidation, are treated with the same degree of urgency and sensitivity.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the number of rheumatoid arthritis sufferers in Northern Ireland who will commence *(a)* Enbrel and *(b)* Remicade treatment in 2004; and what the figures were in 2003. [148843]

Angela Smith: In 2003, nine patients commenced treatment on Enbrel and 16 patients commenced treatment on Remicade. I announced on 13 January that we would provide additional resources for such anti-TNF drugs for 2004–05. Decisions have yet to be taken on detailed funding allocations so it is not possible to estimate the number of patients who may benefit from these therapies in 2004.

Suicides

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the number of suicides that took place in Northern Ireland in 2003. [148952]

Mr. Pearson: Mortality statistics for 2003 have not been fully collated and therefore the latest available data relate to 2002. In 2002, there were 162 deaths registered in Northern Ireland due to "suicide and self-inflicted injury" and 21 deaths due to "undetermined injury whether accidentally or purposefully inflicted".

Traffic Calming

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review the criteria used by Roads Service Northern Ireland to decide on areas to be included in traffic calming schemes. [149719]

Mr. Spellar: I have asked the Chief Executive of Roads Service to write to the hon. Gentleman in response to this question. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the total expenditure on information campaigns and advertising was for his Department for each year since 1997. [145655]

Mrs. McGuire: The Scotland Office was established on 1 July 1999.

Since that date, expenditure on information campaigns and advertising has been as follows:

	£
1999–2000	26,861
2000–01	270,494
2001–02	186,564
2002–03	10,930

Note:
Most of the expenditure during this period related to electoral registration information.

Mr. Peter Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what systems are in place to ensure economies of scale in advertising purchasing between the Scottish Executive and his Department. [145679]

Mrs. McGuire: The Scotland Office works closely with the Scottish Executive on procurement and purchasing issues and participates in joint contracts, wherever possible.

Call Centres

Annabelle Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on prospects for employment in Scottish call centres. [148752]

Mrs. McGuire *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Scotland is home to a significant proportion of the UK's call centres. The Government recognise the important role that call centres play in the Scottish job market and in the wider economy, and will work to ensure the continued development of the industry.

The DTI recently commissioned a study into the competitiveness of the UK call centre industry, and its initial findings will be available from the end of March.

Population Statistics

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the population of Scotland is, broken down by postcode district. [149363]

Mrs. McGuire: Population statistics in Scotland is a matter for the General Register Office for Scotland, an associated department of the Scottish Executive.

Population statistics broken down by postcode district can be obtained from "Scotland's Census Records OnLine" (scrol) which is accessible through the General Register Office for Scotland's website at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Appeals

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many appeals against decisions made at personal capability assessments were *(a)* heard and *(b)* decided in the appellant's favour in the last 12 months, broken down by benefit; what the average length of time between lodging an appeal against a personal capability assessment decision and having that appeal heard was in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [147813]

Maria Eagle: This is a matter for Christina Townsend, Chief Executive of the Appeals Service. She will reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from Christina Townsend to Mr. Paul Holmes, dated 19 January 2004:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question regarding how many appeals against decisions made in personal capability assessments were *(a)* heard and *(b)* decided in the appellant's favour in the last 12 months, broken down by benefit; and what the average length of time between lodging an appeal against a personal capability assessment decision and having that appeal heard was in the last 12 months.

The first table shows the number of personal capability assessment appeals cleared and the number found in the appellant's favour, the second table shows the average clearance time in weeks.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Number of Personal Capability Assessment Appeals cleared at hearing and cleared in favour of the appellant, December 2002 to November 2003

	Total benefit claimants	*Cleared at hearing*	*Cleared in favour*	*Percentage cleared in favour*
PCA (Incapacity Benefit)	[1]2,400,500	41,570	20,130	48.4
PCA (Not Incapacity Benefit):				
Income Support	[2]4,016,000	435	190	43.7
Jobseekers Allowance	[3]911,300	[4]—	[4]—	Not applicable
Others	Not available	90	30	33.3
Severe Disablement Allowance	[5]315,300	35	20	57.1

Appeals Figures Notes:
1. All figures are subject to change as more up to date data becomes available. Figures for the latest months may rise significantly as information feeds through to the Appeals Service.
2. Caseloads are rounded to the nearest five and percentages to one decimal place.
Source:
100 per cent. download of the Generic Appeals Processing System.
Claimant Figures Notes:
[1] As of August 2003; Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
[2] As of August 2003; Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
[3] As of August 2003; Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
[4] Nil or negligible.
[5] As of August 2003; Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
Note:
Not all claimants of these benefits are subject to the PCA. Therefore comparisons between the claimant numbers and appeals should be taken with caution.
Source:
IAD Information Centre, 5 per cent. Samples.

Average clearance time in weeks for PCA appeals from lodged to cleared in the periods shown

	Clearance time
December 2002 to November 2003	23.53

Notes:
1. All figures are subject to change as more up to date data becomes available. Figures for the latest months may rise significantly as information feeds through to the Appeals Service.
2. Figures are rounded to two decimal places.
Source:
100 per cent. download of the Generic Appeals Processing System.

Departmental Office (Hebburn)

Mr. Hepburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many staff will be relocated from his Department's offices in Hebburn; [146993]

(2) how many people will be employed at replacement sites for work previously undertaken at his Department's offices in Hebburn; [146994]

(3) where the replacement sites for the Department's offices in Hebburn will be located; and what the cost of relocation will be. [146995]

Maria Eagle: Inland Revenue (IR) is the major occupier of the Reyrolle Building, Hebburn with around 400 staff, and also manages the contract. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) rent space at Hebburn to accommodate around 60 staff from Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) and The Pension Service.

IR extended the lease on the building until 2006 to provide temporary accommodation for IR and DWP due to the ongoing redevelopment of the Longbenton estate and it will be available for occupation until then.

DWP Estates are looking at alternative accommodation within the area for DWP staff currently working in Hebburn. Staff are being consulted and factors such as accessibility, local facilities and public transport links will be taken into account.

Departmental Relocation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of re-location of staff to North Staffordshire; and if he will make a statement; [146873]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of proposals to relocate Government jobs on the Department's ability to meet *(a)* departmental policy objectives and *(b)* departmental public service agreements; [146884]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of possible relocation of staff in his Department to North Staffordshire on *(a)* job creation, *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* the local economy and *(d)* tackling regional economic disparities; and if he will make a statement; [146898]

(4) what plans he has to establish procedures for assessing the impact of possible relocation of staff in his Department to the regions; and if he will make a statement. [146929]

Maria Eagle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 516W.

Local Government Finance (Taunton Deane)

Mr. Flook: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the *(a)* rent allowance, *(b)* council tax benefit and *(c)* non-housing revenue account rent allowance actual settlement was for Taunton Deane borough council for 2003–04; and what the provisional settlement for each was for 2004–05. [150064]

Maria Eagle: The information is not available.

All funding relating to indirect Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit subsidy will transfer to this Department from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in April 2004. As a result, we have reviewed all current subsidy rates and rules and will pay all Housing benefit and Council Tax Benefit subsidy direct to authorities from April. DWP Circular S9/2003 sets out all the changes in detail and explains the transitional protection measures to be put in place to protect local authorities who may receive less funding under the new rules. A copy of the circular is available in the Library.

Pension Payments (Edinburgh)

John Barrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in the *(a)* City of Edinburgh local authority area and *(b)* Edinburgh West constituency have been written to by his Department regarding direct payment; how many have opted for a Post Office card account; how many have opted to have their money paid into a normal or new basic bank account; and how many have yet to express a preference. [142622]

Mr. Pond: We do not have the information in the format requested. This could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Key figures on the progress of conversion to Direct Payment are available in the Library, updated every four weeks.

Women's Pensions

Mrs. Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment he has made of women's pension provision. [149755]

Malcolm Wicks: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Crosby (Mrs. Curtis-Thomas) on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 505W.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 15 December 2003 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Muhammed Hussain Ahmed. [149544]

Mr. Mullin: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary replied to my right hon. Friend's letter of 15 December 2003 on 13 January 2004.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the steps that need to be taken to bring about peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. [149198]

Mr. Mullin: The peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) took a big step forward in 2003 with the ratification of the Global Accord (signed in Pretoria on 17 December 2002) and the inauguration of an inclusive Transitional National Government (TNG) in July 2003.

The TNG now faces some significant challenges. These include preparation of the country for democratic elections in 2005, economic regeneration, establishing basic systems of governance to help prevent conflicts

and reduce poverty, and security sector reform. The UK Government will continue to work with our partners in a co-ordinated international effort to bring lasting peace. There has also been a large increase in British aid to the DRC.

Ghana

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Ghana. [148156]

Mr. Mullin: Foreign engagements for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers are kept under constant review. It is not practice to announce such visits until they are firm. Because of the unpredictable nature of world events, final decisions on overseas visits are often not possible until very shortly before the day of travel and occasionally not until they are under way. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited Ghana in February 2002 and I visited Accra in 2003.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Ghana. [149494]

Mr. Mullin: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him today.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that the night goggles provided by the EU to Ghana are used in accordance with the country's undertakings. [149496]

Mr. Mullin: All EU members are required to assess rigorously all export licence applications on a case-by-case basis against the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on arms exports, taking account of the circumstances prevailing at the time, embargoes and other announced policies. The 1998 EU Code of Conduct on arms exports is available in the Library of the House. The criteria set out the EU's commitment to take account of the risk that exports might be used for either internal repression or external aggression.

The Ghanaian armed forces are professional and well respected. We have no reason to doubt that night vision equipment exported by the EU would be used for any other than legitimate purposes.

Iraq

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library full statements of income and expenditure by the Coalition Provisional Authority. [149086]

Mr. Rammell: The International Advisory and Monitoring Board (IAMB), established under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1483, is charged with auditing income to, and expenditure from, the Development Fund for Iraq by the Coalition Provisional Authority. The IAMB is made up of representatives from the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development. As soon as the Board has reported on the accounts, I will place a copy of their report in the Library of the House.

Israel

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to the Israeli authorities regarding the nature of charges being brought against the soldier arrested for the killing of Mr. Tom Hurndall. [148936]

Mr. Mullin: The Israeli soldier, held in connection with the shooting of Tom Hurndall, has been charged with aggravated assault, obstruction of justice and other offences. A second soldier has now been charged. We understand the Israelis are reviewing the charges in light of Mr. Hurndall's death. We are in regular contact with the family and will be discussing the response to these developments with them.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to the Israeli authorities to ensure that the family of Mr. Tom Hurndall will have access to all evidence relevant to the case. [148937]

Mr. Mullin: We have pressed the Israeli authorities for a full and transparent investigation into the shooting of Tom Hurndall. My noble Friend the Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean is writing to the Israeli authorities regarding the family's wishes to see the results of the investigation.

John Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Israel about their plans to expand illegal settlements in the occupied Golan Heights. [149480]

Mr. Rammell: The Government regularly raise with the Government of Israel their concerns about continued Israeli settlement construction. Settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to a comprehensive peace in the region.

Organisation of African Unity

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to improve relations with the Organisation of African Unity. [149495]

Mr. Mullin: The UK has increasing contact, at senior official and ministerial level, with the African Union (AU) which formally replaced the Organisation of African Unity in 2002. I met the Chairman of the African Union Commission, Professor Alpha Konare on 19 January 2004.

The AU has set itself important objectives in promoting peace and security, governance and economic integration. The UK has provided support (£1,089,745) to the AU Conflict Management Centre and the AU's wider peacekeeping work (£5.9 million to the African Mission in Burundi, AMIB). We are also providing small-scale support to assist the current Chairman of the AU Assembly (HE Joaquim Chissano, President of Mozambique) with Mozambique's AU Presidency duties and English language teaching to the AU Commission Chairman.

The UK also gives strong support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a programme of the African Union, through our

commitments under the G8 Africa Action Plan and also through financial support (£500,000) managed through a UNDP trust fund to the NEPAD Secretariat.

Occupied Territories

John Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government plan to provide a written statement to the International Court of Justice on the case, Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. [149481]

Mr. Rammell: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) on 12 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 530W. I will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the use of Article 308 EC as a sole legal base for European Union measures, its implications for defining the areas of competence of the Union and its implications for the principle of subsidiarity. [147531]

Mr. MacShane: Article 308 requires, in order for it to be used as a legal base for action, that a proposal be necessary for the attainment of a Community objective, and have unanimous support at the Council. We have given an undertaking that where the Commission puts forward a legislative proposal citing Article 308 as its legal base, we will provide the Scrutiny Committees with the Commission's justification of this choice of legal base. Any such proposal would need to respect the principle of subsidiarity set out in Article 5 TEC.

Terrorism

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the extent of collaboration and sharing of expertise between terrorist organisations internationally. [148948]

Mr. MacShane: There are varying levels of contact between al-Qaeda and other international terrorist groups either related to al-Qaeda or sharing similar agendas, including sharing ideological ideas and expertise, and co-operating on funding, planning and facilitation. The loss of safe havens such as Afghanistan, and the successful pursuit and arrest of senior terrorists, have made this process more difficult. But terrorist individuals and groups continue to find ways to collaborate and communicate, including through use of the Internet.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Best: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Home Office about reducing the time taken by the Home Office to respond to requests for information made by the Visa Section of the British High Commission in Harare about visa applicants. [149487]

Mr. Mullin: With effect from 10 January, new procedures have been set in place to ensure that requests for information from our diplomatic posts overseas are dealt with expeditiously by the Home Office. In line with these new procedures, the Home Office will notify the Visa Section as soon as they receive the request for information and agree a timescale for providing it. It is envisaged that these measures will create a secure and faster system for exchanging information between the Visa Sections at all our posts including the British Embassy in Harare and the Home Office.

TREASURY

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many deaths from *(a)* circulatory disease and *(b)* cancer were recorded in each year since 1997. [149868]

Ruth Kelly: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from Len Cook to Paul Burstow, dated 22 January 2004:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking how many deaths from *(a)* circulatory disease and *(b)* cancer were recorded in each year since 1997.(149868)

The latest year for which data are available is 2002. Figures for all circulatory diseases and cancer are shown in the table below for each year from 1997 to 2002.

Number of deaths from circulatory diseases and cancer[1], England and Wales, 1997 to 2002[2]

Calendar year	*(a) Circulatory diseases*	*(b) Cancer*
1997	228,443	137,618
1998	226,675	138,306
1999	219,087	136,181
2000	207,228	134,793
2001[3]	211,842	139,135
2002[3]	209,433	140,174

[1] The cause of death was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision (ICD-9)for the years 1997 to 2000, and the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) for 2001 and 2002. The codes used are listed below:
Diseases of the circulatory system—/CD-9 390–459; ICD-10100–199;
Neoplasms—ICD-9 140–239; ICD-10 COO-D48.

[2] Figures are based on deaths occurring in each calendar year.

[3] The introduction of ICD-10 for coding cause of death in 2001 means that data for circulatory diseases and cancer are not completely comparable with data for years before this date. The data should therefore be interpreted with caution. The effect of change in classification in 2001 on deaths from these causes is described in a report published in May 2002.*
Office for National Statistics. Results of the ICD-10 bridge coding study, England and Wales, 1999. Health
Statistics Quarterly 14 (2002), 75–83.

Child Care

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance with child care costs is provided through the child care element of the working tax credit. [150206]

Dawn Primarolo: The child care element of the working tax credit can provide help with up to 70 per cent. of eligible child care costs subject to weekly maximum limits. For one child the maximum cost that a family can claim for is £135 a week, increasing to £200 a week for the costs of two or more children. This means that the maximum weekly value of the child care element is £94.50 for one child and £140 for two or more children.

Double Taxation Agreement (Switzerland)

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the standard for exchange of information set out in the Double Taxation Agreement between the UK and Switzerland. [149923]

Dawn Primarolo: In broad terms, the Agreement provides for each country to exchange such information at their disposal as is necessary for carrying out the provisions of the Agreement so long as doing so would not disclose any trade, business, banking, industrial or professional secret or trade process and would not be at variance with the regulations and practice of either country.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for the current Double Taxation Agreement between the UK and Switzerland of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Report on Improving Access to Bank Information for Tax Purposes: The 2003 Progress Report, with particular reference to exchange of information on criminal, civil and administrative matters. [149924]

Dawn Primarolo: This Government are committed to effective exchange of information between countries as a vital tool in the fight against cross border tax evasion and avoidance. We have been at the forefront of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's initiative on improving access to bank information for tax purposes. We shall continue to urge those countries that have not yet taken the necessary steps to allow appropriate access to bank information for all tax purposes, to do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what agreements the Government have entered into with Switzerland in compliance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development standard for exchange of information for tax purposes by 2006. [149925]

Dawn Primarolo: The UK has entered into no such agreements.

Mr. Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assurances the Government has given to Switzerland in relation to the EU Directive on the Taxation of Savings Income, under the Double Taxation Agreement, with particular reference to exchange of information in criminal, civil and adminstrative matters. [149926]

Dawn Primarolo: The Government has not given any assurances to Switzerland under the Double Taxation Agreement in relation to the EU Directive on the Taxation of Savings Income.

Employer Compliance Review

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of the Inland Revenue's Employer Compliance Review. [149860]

Dawn Primarolo: Employer compliance operations are under continuous review through the Inland Revenue's quality assurance programme.

Reviews of specific employers are confidential.

Financial Services (Mutual Ownership)

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department plans to review the role of mutual ownership in the investment sector; what steps he is taking to ensure that investors have a choice of mutual ownership in that sector; and if he will make a statement. [149730]

Ruth Kelly: The Government recognise the contribution of the mutual sector, in competition with other service providers, to providing greater choice and diversity in the market. In the current market, consumers have a choice of ownership model for their investment.

Fuel Tax

Mr. James Gray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the tax revenue which would be lost if the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs target for conversion of petrol cars to liquid petroleum gas was achieved. [149279]

John Healey: The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs does not have a target for conversion of petrol cars to liquid petroleum gas.

Mr. Gray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised in the last financial year from *(a)* four star petrol, *(b)* unleaded petrol and *(c)* liquid petroleum gas used in vehicles. [149278]

John Healey: The revenue raised by the Exchequer from fuel duties is published by HM Customs and Excise at www.uktradeinfo.com in the Hydrocarbon Oils Bulletin. The amounts for financial year 2002-03 are:

(a) 1.6 million from leaded petrol[1];

(b) 10.7 million from unleaded petrol;

(c) 8.1 million from road fuel gases[2]

[1] Revenue from leaded petrol is approximately equivalent to that from four star but includes other grades.

[2] Revenue from road fuel gases includes that from liquid petroleum gas (approximately 96 per cent.) and compressed natural gas (approximately 4 per cent.).

Income and Corporation Taxes Act

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax revenue was raised under section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 in the last year; and if he will make a statement. [R] [149817]

Dawn Primarolo: The information requested is not available.

Income and Corporation Taxes Act/IR35

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultation he carried out before introducing the IR35 regulation. [R] [149814]

Dawn Primarolo: The intention to legislate the tax treatment of people working through intermediaries was announced in the 1999 Budget, a year before the changes were due to take effect. This was followed by extensive consultation. By the end of August 1999, the Inland Revenue had provided over 1,800 copies of the original proposals to whoever asked for them, and held consultative meetings with 38 representative bodies. Over 1,700 written comments and suggestions were received, considered and used to inform development of the intermediaries legislation.

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultation he carried out before reinterpreting section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. [R] [149813]

Dawn Primarolo: There has been no reinterpretation of Section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. The Inland Revenue published in April 2003 guidance on their existing interpretation.

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of *(a)* the IR35 regulation and *(b)* section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 regulation in securing additional tax revenue. [R] [149861]

Dawn Primarolo: Those covered by the intermediaries legislation are required to register with the Inland Revenue as employers and to operate PAYE/NIC in accordance with the legislation. The Inland Revenue does not routinely collect data in respect of specific types of employer from either PAYE/NIC returns or in respect of its Employer Compliance Review programme. It is therefore not possible to isolate the increase to the exchequer arising from this legislation. Information on the amount of tax charged under Section 660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 is not available.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account is taken of best practice in relation to dealing with people with disabilities in leaflets produced by the Inland Revenue. [150415]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue advertises the availability of leaflets in different formats on their internet site and in most leaflets. Some leaflets, such as the one about blind person's allowance, follow RNIB guidelines as standard.

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Inland Revenue has to introduce a leaflet available *(a)* in hard copy and *(b)* on the Inland Revenue website explaining revenue help for those with special needs and indicating the main areas of tax legislation giving reliefs for those with disabilities. [150417]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue are researching the most appropriate methods, including leaflets, of effectively publicising the help available to those with special needs. The Inland Revenue have been working with the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group on this issue.

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Orderline of the Inland Revenue is able to *(a)* take orders for large print editions of the most commonly requested leaflets and forms and *(b)* arrange for delivery on request. [150420]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue are researching the most appropriate routes, including the Orderline, for taxpayers with special needs to obtain material in different formats. Currently they are asked to contact their Inland Revenue office or local Inland Revenue Enquiry Centre, if they require specialised products.

Mr. Goodman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether *(a)* large print, *(b)* audio and *(c)* braille products are available on request from the Inland Revenue; and if he will make a statement. [150421]

Dawn Primarolo: Yes, large print, audio and braille products are available on request from the Inland Revenue. Currently the Inland Revenue are researching the most appropriate routes, including the Orderline, Inland Revenue offices and Inland Revenue Enquiry Centres, for taxpayers with special needs to obtain material in different formats.

Local Authority Housing Debt (Scotland)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much local authority housing debt he has written off to date under the special stock transfer arrangements for Scotland. [149644]

Mr. Boateng: Under the stock transfer arrangements, which are broadly similar to those in England, £1,055 million has been provided to repay local authority housing debt.

National Savings

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many National Savings Ordinary Accounts have been *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed in each of the last five years for which records are available. [149484]

Ruth Kelly: The number of National Savings and Investments Ordinary Accounts opened and closed in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number opened*	*Number closed*
1999	228,432	436,295
2000	235,293	440,686
2002	216,057	445,067
2002	197,938	449,447
2003	201,169	415,840

Tax Collection

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what targets he has set for securing additional tax

revenue from investigations under *(a)* the IR35 regulation and *(b)* section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 regulation. [R] [149806]

Dawn Primarolo: The Chancellor has not set any targets for securing additional tax revenue from investigations under the intermediaries legislation or Section 660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what procedures are in place to monitor the progress of investigations under *(a)* the IR35 regulation and *(b)* section 660A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 regulation. [R] [149807]

Dawn Primarolo: The Inland Revenue has procedures in place to monitor all enquiry work including the intermediaries legislation and S660A Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. These procedures include regular reviews by the case officers and their line managers plus reviews by more senior officers in certain cases.

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what penalties exist for late payment of tax; and how many times in each of the last five years these penalties have been used; [R] [149808]

(2) how many fines have been imposed for late payment of taxes in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [R] [149811]

Dawn Primarolo: Whilst tax paid late might attract interest or surcharge, the tax legislation does not impose penalties or fines for late payment of tax.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that companies do not avoid paying tax in the UK; and if he will make a statement; [R] [149815]

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that individuals do not avoid their tax responsibilities; and if he will make a statement. [R] [149816]

Dawn Primarolo: This Government are committed to tackling avoidance of tax and has introduced a number of anti-avoidance measures. We continue to monitor the position and shall not hesitate to introduce further legislation to protect the tax base when it is necessary to do so.

Working Tax Credit

Mr. Jim Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims for the working tax credit by *(a)* single persons and *(b)* couples without children there are in each region and nation of the UK; and if he will estimate how many will be eligible in each (i) region and (ii) country of the UK. [149641]

Dawn Primarolo: The number of couples and single adults receiving Child and Working Tax Credits in each country within the United Kingdom and in each region of England is shown at Table 8.1 of "Child and Working Tax Credit Statistics. October 2003", which is on the Inland Revenue web site at www.inlandrevenue.aov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/menu.htm.

Estimates for January 2004 will be published on 30 January 2004. No estimates will be available of the take-up rate of these tax credits until the Family Resources Survey for 2003–04 becomes available.

HEALTH

Infertility

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) by what means the Government will ensure implementation of the forthcoming National Institute for Clinical Excellence clinical guidance on the treatment and management of infertility; [147739]

(2) whether it is the Government's policy that infertility services should be made available on the NHS to all those with a clinical need. [147740]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The second draft of the guideline produced by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) was published on 26 August 2003. NICE is considering comments made on that draft. It would not be appropriate to comment on implementation until NICE publishes its final guideline.

Bristol Royal Infirmary (Heart Surgery Inquiry)

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now respond substantively to recommendations 192 to 197 of the Report of the Public Inquiry into Children's Heart Surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary. [149268]

Dr. Ladyman: These recommendations were considered by the paediatric and congenital cardiac services review group which was established in March 2001. The report of the review group, which was published on 18 December 2003, offered advice on ways to ensure that standards are maintained and improved, based on the recommendations from this Inquiry. The report has been placed in the Library and is available on the Department of Health's website at www.doh.gsi.gov.uk/childcardiac

The review group did not support recommendation 197 that surgical services for children with very rare congenital heart conditions, or involving procedures undertaken very rarely, should only be performed in a maximum of two units and instead made their own recommendations for introducing new procedures.

With one exception, a recommendation to only keep centres carrying out at least 300 operations per year, the Government accepted all the review group's recommendations.

Care Homes

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been commissioned by the National Care Standards Commission to inspect care homes for the elderly; and what the full-time equivalent is. [149797]

Dr. Ladyman: The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) does not commission inspectors or inspections. It fulfils its statutory inspection duty by

employing 1,501 inspectors. This is the full-time equivalent of 1,414 people. In addition, the NCSC employs 79 locums.

Crisis Resolution Teams

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to the NHS Plan paragraph 14.31, how many crisis resolution teams have been established; and of these teams, how many are able to offer a 24-hour service. [148061]

Ms Rosie Winterton *[holding answer 20 January 2004]*: According to the Durham mental health service mapping database (http://www.dur.ac.uk/service.mapping/amh), there are 132 crisis resolution teams currently in operation, 81 of which are offering a 24-hour service.

Dentistry

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the impact that an increased proportion of women in the dental workforce has had on the availability of full-time equivalent practising dentists. [147502]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The number of male dentists in the general dental service has increased during the past 10 years from 11,819 dentists at September 1993 to 12,607 at September 2003. The number of female dentists has increased from 3,954 to 5,930. The female proportion has risen from 25 per cent. to 32 per cent. The implications are discussed in the report of the Dental Workforce Review, which we will be publishing shortly.

Diabetes (South Sefton)

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether South Sefton's Primary Care Organisation has appointed a clinical champion for diabetes; [148997]

(2) what the percentage is of general practitioners providing *(a)* diabetes clinics and *(b)* other forms of structured diabetes care for South Sefton Primary Care Trust; [149000]

(3) whether people with diabetes are able to have *(a)* blood glucose tests with results on the same day, *(b)* urine tests with results on the same day, *(c)* access on the same day to specialist expertise within primary care and *(d)* access to equipment for retinopathy screening with interpretation on the same day, under South Sefton Primary Care Trust; [149018]

(4) whether South Sefton Primary Care Organisation has a protocol for the transfer of young people with diabetes from paediatric services to adult services; [149019]

(5) whether South Sefton Primary Care Organisation has a local diabetes implementation and planning group to lead service commissioning; [148998]

(6) whether South Sefton Primary Care Organisation *(a)* has a population-based register and *(b)* uses general practitioners' practice-based registers; [149001]

(7) whether South Sefton Primary Care Organisation has a strategy for early identification of people with diabetes; [149002]

(8) whether the South Sefton Primary Care Trust provided training in the management of diabetes in the last two years for *(a)* general practitioners and *(b)* diabetes clinics; [148999]

(9) whether South Sefton Primary Care Trust provides joint specialist diabetes and obstetric clinics for people in the area; [149020]

(10) whether the South Sefton Primary Care Trust provides joint specialist renal and diabetes clinics for people with diabetes who have renal complications; [149021]

(11) how often people are routinely recalled for retinopathy screening by South Sefton Primary Care Trust; and whether digital cameras are used; [149003]

(12) what percentage of people with diabetes were screened in the period April 2002 to March 2003 by South Sefton Primary Care Trust; [149004]

(13) whether people with diabetes in the South Sefton Primary Care Trust area are invited to diabetes education sessions with a healthcare professional; [149005]

(14) what written information is available on *(a)* diabetes, *(b)* self-management of diabetes, *(c)* personal diabetes record and care plans, *(d)* local diabetes services, *(e)* outcomes of care and *(f)* Diabetes UK to people diagnosed with diabetes by South Sefton Primary Care Trust; and in what languages this material is available; [149015]

(15) whether South Sefton Primary Care Trust's register enables the call and recall of invitations for people with diabetes to attend services; [149016]

(16) whether people with diabetes in the South Sefton Primary Care Trust area are able to access *(a)* routine diabetes care and *(b)* risk factor monitoring in a single visit; [149017]

(17) whether the South Sefton Primary Care Trust provides foot care clinics for those at high risk of developing lower limb complications. [149022]

Miss Melanie Johnson: This information is not collected centrally. However it can be obtained from the following website: www.drfoster.co.uk/diabetes/objectlist.aspx?obid = 271&w = 1&p = 1.

The website can be accessed via www.diabetes.org.uk.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what *(a)* funding and *(b)* other support there is for parents with children with Down's Syndrome; what plans he has to increase *(i)* funding and (ii) other support; and if he will make a statement. [149419]

Dr. Ladyman: Over £3 billion a year is spent on health and social services for people with learning disabilities, including those with Down's Syndrome. People with

Down's Syndrome also use mainstream health and social services and benefit from increased expenditure on those services.

People with Down's Syndrome and their family carers will also benefit from our proposals for improving services for people with learning disabilities, their families and carers as set out in the White Paper "Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century" (Cm 5086), published in March 2001. "Valuing People" sets out a comprehensive five year strategy to be implemented by the Government and by local agencies.

The White Paper also announced the creation of two new funds to support its priorities; the Implementation Support Fund (ISF) of £2.3 million a year from April 2001 and the Learning Disability Development Fund (LDDF), comprising of £23.1 million revenue and £20 million capital in 2003–04. Our annual report on learning disability, "Making Change Happen" (HC 514), published in April 2003, announced that the ISF would continue until March 2006. The LDDF will also continue until March 2006.

Families of children with Down's Syndrome have also benefited from Government programmes to support disabled children. As part of the "Quality Protects" (QP) programme, the disabled children's ringfenced grant rose from £15 million last year to £30 million this year. This, along with the yearly rises in the Carer's Grant, is leading to increases in the levels of provision of short term breaks for parents of disabled children. Direct payments were introduced in the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000; one of the key aims is to give families greater choice and flexibility in how they receive services, including the range of short term breaks. As part of the development of national service framework for children, the Government are considering how best to support the particular needs of families with disabled children, who require flexible services responsive to their particular needs.

The Down's Syndrome Association has been awarded a grant of £28,000 for a two year project, "Planning for a Healthy Life". The project aims to produce web-based information on the specific health issues that need to be taken into account in health action planning for people with Down's Syndrome by medical students, general practitioners and health workers.

People with Down's Syndrome and their family carers will also benefit from the outcome of this project.

Environmental Impact Study

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will commission a study on the environmental impact of staff and service users across the NHS. [148316]

Miss Melanie Johnson: It is Government policy that environmental considerations must be properly taken into account in all the activities and services provided by the national health service. It is for each individual hospital trust to undertake environmental impact assessments for the services it provides and the facilities used by its staff and service users.

Health and Social Services (Lincolnshire)

Mr. Simmonds: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding *(a)* in absolute terms and *(b)* per head of population has been made available in (i) Lincolnshire and (ii) England for the provision of adult social services in each year since 1995. [148475]

Dr. Ladyman: The information requested is shown in the table.

Resources provided for adult social services[1]

	Total adult resources (£ million)	*Total per head of population (£)*
Lincolnshire		
1995–96	60	125
1996–97	67	139
1997–98	72	148
1998–99	73	149
1999–2000	78	156
2000–01	82	163
2001–02	88	173
2002–03	105	204
2003–04	114	221
2004–05	121	232
England		
1995–96	5,220	140
1996–97	5,746	154
1997–98	6,081	162
1998–99	6,458	172
1999–2000	6,827	181
2000–01	7,176	189
2001–02	7,701	201
2002–03	8,766	228
2003–04	9,527	246
2004–05	10,117	260

[1] The funding figures include both FSS and grants. The figures include some grants which can be used to support all social care services. These are Carers, Training Support Programme, Human Resources Development Strategy, Performance Fund and National Training Strategy Grants. It is not possible to split these grants between adult and children's services.

Health Services (Lancashire)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people with dementia were in residential care in Lancashire in the last year for which figures are available; and how many people were funded by the NHS. [147856]

Miss Melanie Johnson: There were about 80 people with dementia receiving residential care in Lancashire in 2001–02. Information on the number of people with dementia in residential care funded by the national health service is not available.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* doctors and *(b)* nurses work in the *(i)* Preston and (ii) Chorley hospitals; and what the pay costs were for each of the last three years. [147857]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The table shows the numbers and pay costs of doctors and nurses working in Preston and Chorley hospitals for the last three years of available data.

It should be noted that mental health services and acute services in this area were restructured in 2001–02, with some doctors and nurses previously counted within the returns for the acute trusts transferring to other trusts without hospital based care.

Staffing numbers and costs as at September

	Doctors	*Cost*	*Nurses*	*Cost*
2000 01				
Preston Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	355	19,265.4	1,256	26,285.5
Chorley & South Ribble NHS Trust	118	8,311.5	772	20,267.5
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust				
Total cost		27,576.9		46,553.0
2001 02				
Preston Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	348	22,277.1	1,330	30,616.0
Chorley & South Ribble NHS Trust	142	9,091.6	603	17,713.8
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust				
Total cost		31,814.3		53,102.4
2002 03[1]				
Preston Acute Hospitals NHS Trust				
Chorley & South Ribble NHS Trust				
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	484	34,444.0	1,915	48,746.7
Total cost		36,298.7		74,330.4

[1] 2002 03 cost data is provisional

Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census
Department of Health General and Personal Medical Services Statistics

Intermediate Care

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) for what reason figures are not available for the number of people who received intermediate care in 2000 01; [148872]

(2) for what reason figures are not available for the number of intermediate care beds there were in 2000 01. [148873]

Dr. Ladyman: The NHS Plan announced targets for intermediate care services in July 2000. A detailed retrospective survey was undertaken by the Department to establish baseline figures for 1999–2000. From April 2001, formalised data collecting began, following the publication of defining criteria in the January 2001 circular (HSC 2001/01: LAC(2001)1).

Lung Cancer

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to improve the *(a)* detection, *(b)* diagnosis and *(c)* treatment of lung cancer; and if he will make a statement. [148060]

Miss Melanie Johnson *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* Early detection of all cancers improves a patient's chance of survival. In March 2000, "Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer" were published and sent to all general practitioners in order to help them identify those patients who are most likely to have cancer, so that they can be referred urgently to a specialist. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is in the process of updating these guidelines. The update is due to be published in February 2005.

In order to ensure that high quality services for cancer patients are provided across the country, the NHS Cancer Plan set out the following broad approach, which addresses the diagnosis process and treatment:

the development of a comprehensive package of guidance ("Improving Outcomes" guidance) on services which are most likely to improve outcomes for different types of cancer;

the translation of this guidance into measurable national standards (the "Manual of Cancer Standards"); and

a national programme of peer review to ensure compliance with these standards.

"Improving Outcomes Guidance on Lung Cancer" was published by the Department in 1998 and lung cancer services were peer reviewed on the resulting standards in 2001. The "Manual of Cancer Standards" is currently being updated and a three-year rolling programme of cancer peer review against this manual is expected to start in autumn 2004. In addition, NICE is preparing clinical guidelines for the national health service in England and Wales for the diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer. This is expected to be published in November 2004. NICE has also appraised four chemotherapy drugs for treatment of lung cancer and is in the process of appraising a fifth.

The work of the Modernisation Agency's Cancer Services Collaborative 'Improvement Partnership' (CSC 'IP') is central to the drive to improve the detection, diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer. A specific goal of the CSC 'IP' is to promote early diagnosis of lung cancer.

In November 2003, the establishment of a Lung Cancer Advisory Group was announced. This group, which will be meeting in March, will be chaired by Professor Mike Richards, the National Cancer Director and will advise on the development and delivery of lung cancer services, including relevant elements of the NHS Cancer Plan.

Merseyside Health Action Zone

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the projects and their associated funding arising from the Merseyside Health Action Zone (MHAZ) since 1997; what the total amount

allocated to MHAZ is; and how many administrative posts are required to administer the funding. [147938]

Miss Melanie Johnson: A copy of the information requested on Merseyside Health Action Zones (MHAZ) projects and associated funding has been placed in the Library.

The Department does not hold information relating to the number of administrative posts that were required to administer the funding.

NHS Direct

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many calls relating to colds or influenza were made to NHS Direct in each week in November and December to date, broken down by the age groups *(a)* 0 to 4, *(b)* 5 to 14, *(c)* 15 to 44, *(d)* 45 to 64 and *(e)* 65 years and over. [149084]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The number of calls relating to colds or influenza that were made to NHS Direct in each week in November and December are shown in the table.

	Age groups					
Week	*0–4*	*5–14*	*15–44*	*45–64*	*65+*	*Total—all ages*
2003						
27 October to 2 November	97	129	789	211	110	1,336
3 November to 9 November	95	159	818	235	132	1,439
10 November to 16 November	112	280	820	238	109	1,559
17 November to 23 November	97	240	736	248	113	1,434
24 November to 30 November	92	182	635	217	100	1,226
1 December to 7 December	120	252	646	229	103	1,350
8 December to 14 December	73	129	537	183	84	1,006
15 December to 21 December	61	96	524	192	113	986
22 December to 28 December	85	108	683	290	235	1,401
Total—27 November to 28 December 2003	832	1,575	6,188	2,043	1,099	11,737

The figures provided in the answer are the total number of calls where a NHS Direct nurse has used the cold/flu clinical algorithm. These totals do not include NHS Direct callers with a cold or influenza where the NHS Direct nurse has not used the 'cold/flu' algorithm.

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures he has collated on the use of NHS Direct *(a)* broken down by region and *(b)* within the constituency of Middlesbrough, South and Cleveland, East. [148404]

Ms Rosie Winterton: NHS Direct usage figures broken down by NHS Direct site for the last six months (July to December 2003) are shown in the table.

Calls answered by site by month for July 2003—December 2003

Site	*Calls answered*
Anglia	112,024
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	127,050
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	132,909
East Midlands	199,630
Essex	165,545
Hampshire	146,462
Kent, Surrey, Sussex	211,104
Manchester	210,333
North and Central London	94,865
North East	158,149
North East London	77,912
North West Coast	193,686
South East London	93,783
South West London	74,757
South Yorkshire And South Humberside	120,679
Staffordshire	148,258
Tees, East and North Yorkshire	115,786
Thames Valley and Northamptonshire	136,650
West Country	188,582
West London	133,384
West Midlands	140,232
West Yorkshire	172,411
Grand total	3,154,191

The constituencies of Middlesbrough, South and East, Cleveland are covered by Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust (PCT). For the last six months, NHS Direct Tees, East and North Yorkshire have handled approximately 5,500 calls from patients located in the Middlesbrough PCT area.

Post Mortems

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the scoping study on less invasive approaches to post mortem examination referred to on the Chief Medical Officer's webpage. [148245]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Chief Medical Officer recommended that research should be commissioned into less invasive forms of post mortem examination. In order to take this work forward a scoping study was commissioned by the Department of Health. This will be published shortly and a copy will then be placed in the Library.

Stroke (Gloucestershire)

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many stroke consultants are employed in the NHS in Gloucestershire; what plans there are to increase this number; and if he will make a statement. [149467]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Information for consultants in the specialties cardiology, clinical pharmacology and therapeutics, geriatric medicine, neurology, and rehabilitation medicine within Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Strategic Health Authority (SHA) is shown in the table.

In line with our policy of shifting the balance of power it is now for primary care trusts, in partnership with SHAs and other local stakeholders, to determine how

best to use their funds to meet national and local priorities for improving health, tackling health inequalities and modernising services, based on the specialised knowledge they have of the local community. I am informed by Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire SHA that there are no current plans for the recruitment of additional stroke consultants in Gloucestershire.

Hospital, Public Health Medicine and Community Health Services (HCHS): Consultants within Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire SHA by organisation and specified specialties

Number (headcount)

		Cardiology			Clinical pharmacology and therapeutics			Geriatric medicine		
		2001	2002	June 2003	2001	2002	June 2003	2001	2002	June 2003
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire SHA		15	22	24	1	2	2	24	36	42
Of which										
5F1	Bath and North East Somerset PCT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
RA3	Weston Area NHS Trust	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
RA5	East Gloucestershire NHS Trust	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
RA7	United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	4	6	6	0	1	0	4	5	5
RD1	Royal United Hospitals, Bath NHS Trust	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	5	7
RH6	Gloucestershire Royal NHS Trust	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
RN3	Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust	2	4	3	0	0	1	6	4	5
RNZ	Salisbury Health Care NHS Trust	1	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	3
RTE	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	7	9
RVJ	North Bristol NHS Trust	2	2	5	0	0	0	3	11	11

Number (headcount)

		Neurology			Rehabilitation medicine		
		2001	2002	June 2003	2001	2002	June 2003
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire SHA		11	14	13	0	3	0
Of which							
5F1	Bath and North East Somerset PCT	0	0	0	0	0	0
RA3	Weston Area NHS Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0
RA5	East Gloucestershire NHS Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0
RA7	United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	1	1	1	0	0	0
RD1	Royal United Hospitals, Bath NHS Trust	3	3	2	0	0	0
RH6	Gloucestershire Royal NHS Trust	2	0	0	0	0	0
RN3	Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust	1	1	1	0	0	0
RNZ	Salisbury Health Care NHS Trust	0	0	0	0	3	0
RTE	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust	0	3	3	0	0	0
RVJ	North Bristol NHS Trust	4	6	6	0	0	0

Note:
Data for 2001 and 2002 as at 30 September, data for 2003 as at 30 June.
Source:
Department of Health medical and dental workforce census.

Tuna (Mercury Contamination)

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment his Department has made of research undertaken by the US Food and Drug Administration into mercury contamination of tuna; [148591]

(2) what advice his Department gives to consumers on the consumption of tuna, with particular reference to mercury content. [148593]

Miss Melanie Johnson: The Food Standards Agency advises that pregnant and breast-feeding women, and women who intend to become pregnant, should limit their consumption of tuna to no more than two medium size cans (drained weight approximately 140 g.) or one fresh tuna steak per week as a precaution due to the mercury content. Other consumers do not need to limit their consumption of tuna. This is in line with advice issued by the US Food and Drug Administration on fish consumption, based on surveys of the mercury content of fish.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Anti-Social Behaviour

Mr. Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding anti-social behaviour over Halloween. [145344]

Ms Blears: I have previously received a few representations about anti-social behaviour over the Halloween period. In particular the issues surrounding the increase of Trick or Treating by children.

The majority of children enjoy Halloween without causing problems to their community.

Where any individual causes anti-social behaviour at any time of year we are determined that their behaviour is challenged and stopped, and we have provided the tools to ensure this happens.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 will be brought into force on (*a*) 20 January and (*b*) 27 February; [149104]

(2) what steps he has taken to ensure that Chief Constables and the Crown Prosecution Service are fully aware of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 provisions that come into force on (*a*) 20 January and (*b*) 27 February; [149105]

(3) when the timetable giving the dates for commencement of the sections of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 that are not yet in force will be published; and which sections of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 have not yet been subject to commencement orders. [149106]

Ms Blears: We published "Together-Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour: A Guide to the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003" on 20 January 2004. This explains the Act's contents, how it can be used to deal with the anti-social behaviour and provides commencement dates for all measures in the Act. Copies of the Act will be sent to all Chief Constables in England and Wales and to the Crown Prosecution Service. Copies have also been sent to all Members of Parliament today.

Burglars

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of burglars who are convicted in each of the areas of England and Wales are sentenced to prison. [147366]

Paul Goggins: The information requested is contained in the table.

Courts will approach the decision to sentence for offences of burglary on the basis of guidelines issued by the Court of Appeal in December 2002 and the Magistrates' Courts Sentencing Guidelines issued by the Magistrates' Association (most recent version effective from 1 January 2004). These Guidelines assist the courts in adopting a consistent approach. The new Sentencing Guidelines Council will take on responsibility for these guidelines and for monitoring the way in which the guidelines are used in order to ensure that there is a common approach to sentencing.

Number of persons sentenced for burglary[1] at all courts and those sentenced to immediate custody, by police force area, England and Wales 2002

Police force area	*Total persons sentenced for burglary*	*[2]Persons sentenced to immediate custody*	*Percentage sentenced to immediate custody*
Avon and Somerset	695	379	55
Bedfordshire	224	131	58
Cambridgeshire	335	174	52
Cheshire	500	288	58
Cleveland	677	377	56
Cumbria	253	120	47
Derbyshire	533	290	54
Devon and Cornwall	526	188	36
Dorset	244	131	54
Durham	432	217	50
Essex	434	230	53
Gloucestershire	247	93	38
Greater Manchester	1,614	816	51
Hampshire	776	310	40
Hertfordshire	314	145	46
Humberside	579	318	55
Kent	489	220	45
Lancashire	1,223	610	50
Leicestershire	458	212	46
Lincolnshire	323	137	42
London, City of	27	14	52
Merseyside	650	358	55
Metropolitan Police	3,234	1,776	55
Norfolk	261	109	42
Northamptonshire	237	122	51
Northumbria	927	389	42
North Yorkshire	300	162	54
Nottinghamshire	747	356	48
South Yorkshire	937	523	56
Staffordshire	534	301	56
Suffolk	235	89	38
Surrey	191	88	46
Sussex	402	214	53
Thames Valley	744	360	48
Warwickshire	187	95	51
West Mercia	494	246	50
West Midlands	1,862	1,039	56
West Yorkshire	1,598	873	55
Wiltshire	233	92	39
Dyfed Powys	214	77	36
Gwent	384	146	38
North Wales	317	147	46
South Wales	785	388	49
England and Wales	26,376	13,350	51

[1] These data are on the principal offence basis

[2] Detention and training order, detention in a young offender institution, detention under secs 91/92 of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 and unsuspended imprisonment.

Coroner's Court Hearings (South Gloucestershire)

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that coroner's court hearings affecting residents of South Gloucestershire will take place at locations convenient for residents of South Gloucestershire; and if he will make a statement. [148620]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 19 January 2004]:* Any decision to hold an inquest at a particular location is a matter for the coroner concerned. I understand that following the closure of the coroner's court in Bristol the office has transferred to a site in Long Ashton. However, the inquest may be held at other locations subject to the needs of those wishing to attend and availability of accommodation.

Crime (North-West)

Mr. Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of (*a*) theft and (*b*) robbery of school property there were in (i) St. Helens, (ii) Merseyside, (iii) the north west region and (iv) England in each year since 1997. [147168]

Ms Blears: The Home Office does not collect information on the type of location for recorded crimes, except where it is implicit in the crime type (e.g. theft from a shop, or shop-lifting). It also does not collect information on ownership of property stolen. For these reasons, numbers of robberies and thefts involving school property are not collected separately.

Disability Discrimination Act

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what incentives he is giving trusts to stay within the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 not to discriminate against deaf people in terms of equitable access. [147695]

Dr. Ladyman: I have been asked to reply.

Trusts are responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), including the provision of equitable access for deaf people. There are a number of means by which the Department and others continue to help them.

In 1999, the National Health Service Executive issued management guidance to NHS trusts, health authorities and primary care groups in implementing Part III of the DDA and a guide "Doubly Disabled" was published to increase managers' and staff's awareness of disabled people.

Currently, the Department is developing with the Disability Rights Commission a framework for partnership action on disability, which identifies key areas for joint action. This will deliver real improvements for disabled people as users and providers of health and social care. Access and communication has been identified as a priority and the Department is establishing a working group to oversee a range of initiatives on access, including the production of sector-specific guidance on good practice, and a programme to promote awareness of the access duties set out in the DDA. The NHSU is also working closely with the Disability Rights Commission and others to develop a framework and programme to address training on disabilities issues in health and social care.

Ford Open Prison

Mr. Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners absconded from Ford Open Prison in each year since 1990. [146473]

Paul Goggins: Information is available from 1992. The information recorded at Prison Service headquarters on the reported numbers of absconds from HMP Ford is set out in the following table:

Year	*Number of prisoners absconding from HMP Ford*
1992	59
1993	39
1994	40
1995	20
1996	46
1997	51
1998	41
1999	56
2000	69
2001	50
2002	86
2003	127

Figures are as recorded on the Prison Service incident reporting system and may not be entirely reliable, particularly prior to 1998 when changes were made to the electronic database.

Forensic Science Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the Forensic Science Service is contracted out to private operators in *(a)* Lancashire, *(b)* Cumbria, *(c)* Cheshire, *(d)* Greater Manchester, *(e)* Merseyside and *(f)* North Wales in 2003–04. [148212]

Ms Blears: The Forensic Science Service (FSS) has not contracted out any work received from the named police forces to private sector forensic service providers in the financial year to date.

Home Detention Curfew Scheme

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the Home Detention Curfew. [148890]

Paul Goggins: The operation of the Home Detention Curfew (HDC) scheme is monitored on a weekly basis. Between January 1999, when the scheme was introduced, and 9 January 2004, over 86,000 prisoners have been released under the Home Detention Curfew scheme. At any one time about 3,600 low risk prisoners, who would otherwise be filling prison places, are serving the last part of the custodial portion of their sentence on HDC.

Since the scheme began 90 per cent. of those granted HDC have completed their curfew period without any problems at all and 2 per cent. are reported as having been convicted, cautioned or are awaiting prosecution for an offence committed whilst subject to HDC.

In addition, the Home Office published an evaluation of the operation of the first sixteen months of the scheme in June 2001 (Home Office Research Study 222: "Electronic Monitoring of released prisoners: an evaluation of the Home Detention Curfew scheme").

I am satisfied that the scheme continues successfully to provide suitable prisoners with a smoother and more effective re-integration back into the community by enabling them to be released from prison early while still subject to restrictions placed on their liberty.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department further to his written statement of 14 January, *Official Report*, column 31WS, what other recent exceptional cases may be deemed unsuitable for the Home Detention Curfew Scheme. [149304]

Paul Goggins *[holding answer 20 January 2004]:* No cases have, so far, been referred to the Chief Executive, of the National Offender Management Service. The

policy will apply to any case where the applicant for Home Detention Curfew has been involved in a notorious crime or crime of concern to the public, where release would bring the scheme in to disrepute. Prisoners affected by this change will be able to make representations supporting their release to the Chief Executive of NOMS.

We expect that only a small number of cases will be referred to the Chief Executive.

Imprisonment (Costs)

Mr. George Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the total cost to public funds of the imprisonment of Sally Clarke, Angela Cannings and Trupti Patel has been. [144523]

Paul Goggins: The Prison Service does not maintain information on the cost of imprisonment of specific prisoners. However, as an alternative it is possible to provide the average cost of keeping a prisoner in the establishments in which the particular prisoners referred to in this question served their sentences. This suggests that the total cost to public funds of the imprisonment of Sally Clarke was in the region of £111,000. The cost of detaining Angela Cannings was approximately £57,000.

Trupti Patel did not spend time in prison custody, as she was bailed upon charge and subsequently acquitted.

Juvenile Prisoners

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are in place to ensure that juvenile prisoners are fed adequately while being transported from court to prison. [144358]

Paul Goggins: Escort contractors have a contractual responsibility to provide meals to all prisoners, including juveniles, who are in their custody between 11:30 hours and 14:00 hours; and also in circumstances, such as a late court sitting, which would result in prisoners arriving at the prison after mealtime. The contract requires that meals must be sufficient to sustain the prisoners and meet dietary needs.

Mr. Liton Miah

Dr. Jack Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons the application by Mr. Liton Miah for a work permit under the business and commercial arrangements on Form WP1 (REF ISCO/BO 69511) was refused on the grounds that he was of too high a level of skill; for what reasons he was subsequently refused after applying for a work permit under the sector based schemes on the grounds that he was of too low a level of skill (REF DWA/BO 69511); and if he will make a statement. [144082]

Beverley Hughes *[holding answer 17 December 2003]:* I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 22 January 2004.

Police National Computer

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many updates of the Police National Computer took place in each of the last three years; how many people are authorised to insert, delete or change data on the Police National Computer; what checks are in place to ensure the accuracy of *(a)* data changes and *(b)* the data held; and if he will make a statement. [148414]

Ms Blears: The number of updates of the Police National Computer for the past three years is as follows:

	Number
2001	14,733,611
2002	15,185,975
2003	15,194,333

I regret that information on the number of people authorised to insert, delete or change data on the Police National Computer is not available. It is the responsibility of the Chief Officer of each police force to make the necessary arrangements.

It is also the responsibility of Chief Officers to have in place checking processes to ensure the accuracy of the data held and any changes that are made to it. All the Forces are inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to ensure compliance with the Association of Chief Police Officers and Police National Computer Compliance Strategy. The Chief Constables' Council agreed the strategy on 27 April 2000. The Compliance Strategy sets a number of standards that forces are required to meet, in particular the entering of data on to the Police National Computer in a timely manner.

Prison Officers (Industrial Action)

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking in response to the decison by prison officers across the United Kingdom to take industrial action in support of their Northern Ireland colleagues. [147196]

Paul Goggins: Following detailed negotiations, the dispute between the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Prison Officers' Association (POA) has been successfully resolved as a result, the threat of industrial action by POA members in England and Wales has been lifted.

Prisons

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are in place to tackle bullying of prisoners by other inmates. [149101]

Paul Goggins: Prison Service Order 1702, Anti-Bullying Strategy, contains mandatory instructions to Governors to ensure that all prisons implement and maintain locally an appropriate, advertised anti-bullying strategy. The strategy must aim to prevent bullying behaviour and to address it constructively where it occurs.

It is mandatory for establishments to appoint an anti-bullying co-ordinator, who is responsible for monitoring that the nature and extent of bullying in the prison. They examine a number of factors including the number of requests to move wing and the number of applications to the Independent Monitoring Board, number of assaults. They are obliged to complete at least once every two years.

Unless the prison is particularly small, it is expected that establishments set up a multi-disciplinary anti-bullying committee that meets regularly and makes links with other related areas such as suicide prevention or the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme.

Reducing violence, in all its forms, is fundamental to the objectives of the Prison Service. By constructively and consistently taking action to prevent violence and promote fairness and decency, prisons can offer a structured environment in which to influence future behaviour, encourage positive communication and develop social skills that assist offenders with rehabilitation. Further, maintaining a safe environment reduces stress and anxiety, and promotes individual, organisational and public confidence.

Problems of inter-prisoner violence and bullying are being addressed through development of a Service-wide Violence Reduction Strategy. By the summer of 2004, each prison will have in place a local violence reduction strategy appropriate to needs. Intranet toolkits will help establishments to develop practical solutions, including environmental and physical measures as well as alternatives for behaviour management. Specific issues such as racism, substance misuse, violence, verbal abuse and various types of bullying will be covered with good practice examples. A whole prison approach will be encouraged, with the aim of reducing violence and fear of violence. A focus on personal safety, supporting victims, and repairing the physical and emotional harm caused by violence or abuse, will link closely with the suicide prevention strategy.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost is of keeping someone in prison per day. [148886]

Paul Goggins: The average cost per day of each prisoner during the financial year 2002–03 was £99.36. This figure covers the whole of the prison system, including public sector and contracted prisons, as well as an element of headquarters overheads.

The cost per prisoner varies according to the security of each prison establishment and other factors such as the gender and age of the prisoner. The range of daily costs for 2002–03 was £119 to £54, with the highest being for the High Security estate and the lowest for the Category C estate, which tends to hold a more settled population.

Rehabilitation Programmes

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number and what percentage of short-term prisoners completed a fast track rehabilitation programme during their time in prison in each of the last five years; and what plans he has to increase this percentage over the next two years. [148908]

Paul Goggins: Information is not collected specifically on treatment provision by length of stay in prison. There is currently no system to "fast track" prisoners onto rehabilitation programmes. A short duration drug treatment programme is to be piloted in April 04, giving access to short term and remand prisoners. Detoxification is available immediately on reception into prison.

The Street Crime Initiative makes provision for prisoners to be fast tracked into drug treatment interventions. This includes CARAT services (Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice & Throughcare), as well as detoxification. From April-November 2003, 2,453 prisoners were referred to CARATs. Of those, 1951 were appropriate referrals, 1,807 received an initial assessment and 898 received detoxification.

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend the FOR rehabilitation programme which ran in South Wales to other areas. [148909]

Paul Goggins: The FOR resettlement programme for short-term prisoners is currently in development and being piloted in two establishments. The Prison Service will be seeking the advice of the Correctional Service Accreditation Panel on the programme and will take decisions about extending it to other areas in the light of the advice provided and resourcing available.

Scottish Police

Mr. Tynan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Scottish police officers are seconded to or are serving in a permanent capacity with UK-wide police bodies. [147524]

Mrs. McGuire: I have been asked to reply.

There are 23 Scottish police officers on secondment to the National Criminal Intelligence Service. Information is not held centrally on the number of Scottish officers seconded to or serving in other UK-wide police bodies such as the Police Information Technology Organisation and the Police Scientific Development Branch.

Terrestrial Trunked Radio

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research into the health and safety issues of terrestrial trunked radio his Department has collated since July 2001. [149196]

Ms Blears: On the recommendation of independent experts, the Home Office set up a comprehensive programme of work on TETRA health issues. The Home Office also funds TETRA-related research as an adjunct to the Mobile Telecommunications Research Programme co-ordinated by the Department of Health.

TETRA was found to have no effect on calcium exchanges in cells—the main concern of the Stewart report. Independent checks confirm that TETRA equipment fully conforms with health and safety regulations. Longer-term human volunteer studies are under way.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will commission further research into the health and safety issues of terrestrial trunked radio masts. [149197]

Ms Blears: The Government have no plans to commission any further research into the effects of Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) masts.

The National Radiological Protection Board's independent Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation (AGNIR) has recently published a report on "Health effects from radiofrequency electromagnetic fields". The report confirms that there is no reason to believe that signals from TETRA base stations should be treated differently from those from other base stations. The AGNIR experts do not suggest any further research on TETRA masts.

Independent checks of the TETRA masts used by the new police radiocommunications system, Airwave, have confirmed that they fully comply with international health and safety guidelines.

Young Offender Institutions

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children in *(a)* Stoke Heath and *(b)* Onley Young Offender Institutions have been placed in the segregation units of those Institutions since January; and for how long in each case. [144360]

Paul Goggins: Data on the number of children held in segregation at Stoke Heath and Onley Young Offender Institutions from January to November 2003 are shown in the following tables. This has been split to show the number of times the segregation unit was used for *(a)* less than seven days, *(b)* for longer than seven days and *(c)* for longer than 28 days during this period.

Data on Stoke Heath Young Offender Institution in 2003

	Number of Juveniles		
Month—2003	*Held for less than 7 days*	*Held for longer than 7 days*	*Held for longer than 28 days*
January	19	7	0
February	17	8	0
March	15	7	0
April	6	13	0
May	9	7	0
June	11	6	0
July	13	8	0
August	8	0	0
September	8	7	0
October	2	18	0
November	0	10	0

Data on Onley Young Offender Institution in 2003

	Number of Juveniles		
Month—2003	*Held for less than 7 days*	*Held for longer than 7 days*	*Held for longer than 28 days*
January	10	3	0
February	24	0	0
March	17	0	0
April	13	2	1
May	43	8	0
June	12	8	0
July	21	9	0
August	11	9	0
September	9	12	0
October	28	39	1
November	17	7	0

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are made to provide juvenile female prisoners with clothing. [144366]

Paul Goggins: All young women under the age of 18 in custody wear their own clothing. However, every young woman received into custody automatically receives items of underwear and nightwear. If a young woman does arrive in custody with insufficient clothing she will be given additional clothing provided by the establishment.

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Departmental Minutes

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs in what circumstances decision-making meetings between civil servants and ministers are not minuted; and if he will make a statement. [148400]

Mr. Leslie: Detailed policies and procedures for the creation and management of all records relating to government business are the responsibility of the department concerned. However, the National Archives has a supervisory role in ensuring the safe-keeping of historical value. In this connection the National Archives has issued 'guidance on the management of private office papers', which is available on those records which, once created, are likely to be of enduring its website at: http://www.pro.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/standards/privateoffice.htm

Sentencing Decisions

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Department of Constitutional Affairs what the Appeal Court must conclude for a sentence to be reduced. [145969]

Mr. Leslie: Section 11(3) of the Criminal Appeals Act 1968 provides that an appeal may be allowed against sentence if the appellant may be sentenced "differently" from the way in which he was sentenced in the Crown Court. The Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) will always interfere and quash a sentence if it considers it "manifestly excessive". In addition there are a number of other reasons why an appeal against sentence may succeed. Circumstances between the date of sentence and the hearing of the appeal may change. For example, the CACD may be provided with information about help given by the individual defendant to the prosecuting or prison authorities, which justifies a reduction in sentence. The CACD itself often seeks and is provided with reports from prison, which may give grounds for concluding that although the sentence imposed at the Crown Court is not open to criticism, the sentence has had the necessary impact, and is no longer appropriate. This is of particular importance where the offender is young and his rehabilitation may progress more rapidly if, having served some time in custody, a community sentence was now imposed on him. Changes in relation to sentencing policy may also affect the result of a sentence appeal, where, for example, new "guidelines" have been provided after the sentence was imposed. Other circumstances which may affect the decision of the CACD include sentences imposed following procedural errors, or those which may create a justifiable sense of grievance because of sentences passed on other defendants.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) how many appeals *(a)* against sentence and *(b)* against conviction have been (i) successful and (ii) allowed in each of the last five years as a percentage of the total number of committals for trial for (A) the crown court and (B) magistrates court; [146017]

(2) how many sentencing decisions were made by each judge in the *(a)* crown court and *(b)* Court of Appeal in each of the last five years; [146060]

(3) how many sentencing decisions each serving circuit judge in England and Wales made in each of the last five years. [146061]

Mr. Leslie: We do not have this information in the form requested. We do not measure how many sentencing decisions individual judges make, and this will vary according to the types of case they deal with and the complexity and length of cases they hear. There are currently 604 Circuit Judges, Senior Circuit Judges and equivalents, and 1,326 Recorders; not all of whom sit in criminal cases.

In the five years to 2002, the Crown Court dealt with the following committals for trial or sentence:

Committals for trial

	Receipts	*Disposals*
1998	75,815	77,794
1999	74,232	73,539
2000	71,022	72,762
2001	80,551	75,565
2002	83,449	81,776

Committals for sentence

	Receipts	*Disposals*
1998	29,774	28,224
1999	31,928	30,641
2000	27,591	28,713
2001	25,960	25,717
2002	28,837	28,235

In the same period the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) heard the following full appeals, excluding applications for leave to appeal which were dismissed. It should be tooted that cases heard in the Court of Appeal in a given year may well not have been heard by the Crown Court in the same year.

	Conviction		*Sentence*		*Retrials ordered*
	Allowed	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	
1998	290	403	1,589	609	73
1999	171	380	1,564	614	70
2000	150	333	1,284	522	72
2001	135	313	1,101	561	58
2002	166	319	1,302	500	50

In the same period criminal proceedings were commenced in the magistrates' courts against the following numbers of defendants. These figures include all criminal prosecutions commenced, whether or not they were contested or proceeded to a full trial.

Year	
1998	1,951,915
1999	1,881,765
2000	1,904,677
2001	1,837,733
2002	1,924,828

In the same period the Crown Court heard the following numbers of appeals. These did not necessarily relate to prosecutions in magistrates' courts in the same year. These figures do not include appeals from the magistrates; courts to the High Court by way of case stated.

Appeals

	Receipts	*Disposals*
1998	16,278	16,473.
1999	15,413	15,381
2000	13,902	14,359
2001	12,596	12,679
2002	11,910	11,940

Correspondence

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs when he expects to write to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North to fulfil the undertaking given by his hon. Friend, 13 January 2004, *Official Report*, column 666. [149582]

Mr. Lammy: My letter of 15 January informed my hon. Friend that this is a matter for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Nigel Griffiths), who has agreed to write in response to the points raised on 13 January.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for West Chelmsford of 21 October 2003 concerning Ms B. Quinn of Chelmsford. [149827]

Mr. Leslie: Lord Filkin wrote on 16 January 2004 to the hon. Member for West Chelmsford in response to his letter of 21 October 2003. I apologise for the delay, unfortunately administrative errors prevented an earlier reply.

Divorce

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs if he will take steps to standardise divorce court proceedings in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. [149616]

Mr. Leslie: Northern Ireland is a separate jurisdiction from England and Wales for the purposes of divorce proceedings. Provisions are in place for the mutual recognition of orders and the provision of financial relief as between the jurisdictions. Under the provisions of section 44 of the Family Law Act 1986 orders for divorce, nullity or judicial separation granted in one jurisdiction are recognised in the other. Under the provisions of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 and the Family Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 applications for financial relief can

be made in either jurisdiction in respect of divorces panted in the other. There is also provision for the reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders.

There are no plans to standardise divorce law in England and Wales and Northern Ireland.

Expert Witnesses

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what proportion of criminal cases were overturned on appeal in each of the last five years; and what proportion involved evidence from expert witnesses. [147186]

Mr. Leslie: Figures showing *(a)* the number of defendants convicted in the lower courts, *(b)* those that appealed to the higher courts either against conviction and/or sentence and *(c)* the number of appeals allowed or varied are provided in the following tables. Information relating to the involvement of expert witnesses in criminal cases is not collected centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Court of Appeal

	Convicted in the Crown court	*Lodged appeal*	*Conviction quashed or sentence varied*	*Appeal allowed as percentage of those convicted*	*Appeal allowed as percentage of appeals lodged*
1998	63,585	8,649	1,921	3.0	22.2
1999	57,615	8,274	1,690	2.9	20.4
2000	56,130	7,840	1,385	2.5	17.7
2001	55,164	7,440	1,202	2.2	16.2
2002	58,587	7,718	1,418	2.4	18.4

Crown court

	Convicted in the magistrates court	*Lodged appeal*	*Conviction quashed or sentence varied*	*Appeal allowed as percentage of those convicted*	*Appeal allowed as percentage of appeals lodged*
1998	1,407,781	15,071	6,703	0.5	44.5
1999	1,351,245	14,510	6,406	0.5	44.1
2000	1,367,304	13,032	6,065	0.4	46.5
2001	1,293,308	11,818	5,381	0.4	45.5
2002	1,361,637	11,124	4,795	0.4	43.1

Judges

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) whether the Department keeps centralised records for each serving Circuit Judge of the number of successful appeals on their *(a)* sentencing and *(b)* conviction; [145970]

(2) what process is in place *(a)* to monitor how many times a judge is known to have been successfully appealed against and *(b)* to investigate the reasons for the appeals to find out whether they are (i) on the basis of circumstances beyond the knowledge of the judge at the time the sentence was passed and (ii) on the basis of inappropriate sentences given; [146016]

(3) what action would be taken in the event that *(a)* a judge had been successfully appealed more than 50 times in six or seven years, *(b)* a judge had been found to have been unduly lenient in relation to the same kind of offence on four separate occasions and *(c)* a judge had been criticised for pressurising counsel on more than one occasion; [146069]

(4) what systems are in place to ensure that circuit judges are accountable for their professional performance. [146073]

Mr. Leslie: Judicial decisions are taken and explained in public (save where the circumstances of a case demand confidentiality) and any decision which a judge makes is liable to be scrutinised, and if necessary overturned, on appeal, which is also a public process. Judges are therefore fully accountable for their judicial decisions through the appeal system.

Judges are not, however, accountable through a political process for the decisions they take, as this would not be consistent with judicial independence. The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State therefore does not monitor appeals against decisions made by individual judges, and it is not his role to intervene in judicial decisions or consider complaints about judicial decisions.

A successful appeal to a higher court does not of itself provide a basis for criticism of the trial judge. There are many reasons why an appeal may succeed. Where the Court of Appeal does record criticism of the trial judge, however, the judgment is given publicly and is available to representatives of the media as well as the public. It is always sent to the judge concerned, and where there is any reason for concern about the conduct of the judge it is sent to the relevant Presiding Judges. From time to time where it is thought that judges are not performing adequately they may be given advice and guidance, or training, or different workloads or types of workload by the responsible senior judiciary. Lord Justice Judge, the Deputy Chief Justice, is currently considering improvements to this procedure.

In cases where a judge's personal conduct (as opposed to his decision) is seriously criticised in an appeal decision, the Presiding Judges may decide to refer the matter to the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice to consider. The Lord Chancellor is also able to consider complaints from the public about the personal conduct of judges.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) what plans the Secretary of State has to introduce a system of formal appraisal and scrutiny of circuit judges' performances; [146057]

(2) whether the plans to widen the scrutiny, formal appraisal and accountability of judges will include scrutiny by, and accountability to, a body or panel which includes non-judges. [146062]

Mr. Leslie: A system of formal appraisal has been introduced for holders of certain part-time judicial posts. Consideration is now being given to extending appraisal to the remaining part-time posts including recorders. Formal appraisal is also being introduced for certain full time tribunal judges.

The aim of any appraisal scheme is not to question judicial decisions but to observe the conduct of the judicial process and to consider, positively and constructively with a judge, their approach to and

handling of cases. It is important, in order to maintain the independence of the judiciary and to ensure that appraisal is expert and informed, that it should be undertaken by judges. There are no plans to widen appraisal to include a body or panel which includes non-judges.

The Lord Chancellor has no current plans to extend formal appraisal more widely. In relation to circuit judges, the presiding judges of each circuit are of course in a position to raise with them any concerns about their performance.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) whether a judge may be removed from office for inappropriate sentencing; [146058]

(2) what criteria are used to define misconduct and inability in relation to the removal of judges from office; and whether either category includes a pattern of inappropriate sentencing by a judge; [146064]

(3) what sanctions may be taken against circuit judges whose professional performance regularly falls below acceptable standards; [146065]

(4) what disciplinary procedure is followed in the event that a judge continuously sentences inappropriately. [146074]

Mr. Leslie: In order to ensure their independence judges hold office during good behaviour. Judges of the High Court and above may only be removed by Her Majesty the Queen on an address from both Houses of Parliament. Circuit judges and below may be removed from office by the Lord Chancellor only for incapacity or misbehaviour.

What constitutes incapacity or misbehaviour would be a matter for decision in a particular case. However, the mere fact of having made decisions which had been reversed on appeal could not be said to constitute incapacity or misbehaviour.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) whether the Lord Chancellor has received complaints in relation to the use by judges of wasted costs orders; [146059]

(2) whether his Department keeps records of wasted costs orders imposed against barristers or solicitors. [146063]

Mr. Leslie: We have no record of receiving such complaints and keep no such records. A wasted costs order is an order of the court, and can only be challenged on appeal, not by complaining to the Lord Chancellor.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs which circuit judges are authorised to hear child custody cases; and whether any have had authorisation withdrawn because of concerns over their ability to handle such cases. [146066]

Mr. Leslie: 321 circuit judges hold 'private law authorisations' which enable them to deal with child contact and residence and other related matters. Authorisations are granted and withdrawn for a variety of reasons—most commonly they are withdrawn when the judge concerned no longer hears family cases by virtue of a changing role—such as becoming a designated civil judge for a court.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) how the attention of the Lord Chief Justice is drawn to the suitability of a circuit judge to try rape cases; [146067]

(2) whether any circuit judges have had their rape case authorisation withdrawn because of concerns over their ability to handle such cases sensitively; [146068]

(3) which circuit judges hold a rape case authorisation authorising them to hear cases involving rape and other class 2 crimes; [146071]

(4) how many and which circuit judges and recorders have undergone additional specialist training that enables them to hear cases involving rape and other serious sexual offences; [146075]

(5) how the *(a)* effectiveness and *(b)* suitability of specialist training given to circuit judges and recorders is monitored. [146077]

Mr. Leslie: 471 circuit judges and recorders have undergone the additional specialist training that enables them to hear cases of rape and other serious sexual offences.

The authorisation of individual circuit judges to try rape and other serious sexual offences is made by the senior presiding judge on behalf of the Lord Chief Justice. Such judges are identified by the presiding judges of each circuit. The judge must have wide and significant experience of the criminal justice system, and must have demonstrated the necessary sensitivity for these cases. Before dealing with these cases, specialist training is provided for them by the Judicial Studies Board.

The withdrawal of a rape authorisation is decided by the Lord Chief Justice personally. The authorisation was withdrawn when the Court of Appeal criticised the way in which a trial judge had summed up a rape case to the jury. Such cases will no longer be listed before another judge who appears persistently to have ignored sentencing guideline decisions in such cases. For at least the last five years no authorisation has been withdrawn because of general concerns over any authorised circuit judge's ability to handle such sensitive cases. If there were evidence to suggest any lack of appropriate sensitivity it would be drawn to the attention of the Lord Chief Justice either by the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) or by presiding judges or through the media, or by way of complaint.

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) how many complaints against judges the Lord Chancellor has heard in each of the previous five years; and what details of these complaints and the outcome are publicly available; [146070]

(2) what *(a)* complaints and *(b)* disciplinary procedures will be put in place after the abolition of the post of Lord Chancellor. [146076]

Mr. Leslie: The Lord Chancellor typically receives between 1,000 and 1,200 complaints about judges each year. The majority of these turn out to be complaints

against judicial decisions and the complainant is advised that the appropriate remedy is by way of appeal. Those complaints which appear to relate to judicial conduct are investigated and both the complainant and the judge concerned are informed of the outcome. However, the results of this disciplinary process are not normally publicised more widely. Since May 1997, 27 judges have been reprimanded by the Lord Chancellor. These have included one High Court judge, 11 circuit judges, eight district judges, five recorders, and two deputy district judges.

The Lord Chancellor is currently considering the future arrangements for judicial complaints and discipline and hopes to be in a position to announce these shortly.

Public Defender Service

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs (1) what the set up costs were of each of the Public Defender Service's pilot offices; [149439]

(2) what assessment *(a)* he and *(b)* the Legal Services Commission has made of the average cost per case arising from the Public Defender Service's handling of criminal defence work in (i) 2001–02 and (ii) 2002–03; [149440]

(3) what assessment *(a)* he and *(b)* the Legal Services Commission has made of the Public Defender Service's performance; and how this has informed decisions regarding the extension of those pilots. [149441]

Mr. Lammy: The set up costs of the Public Defender Service (PDS) were as follows: Birmingham £193,312; Cheltenham £221,054; Darlington £126,867; Chester £175,225; Liverpool £141,663; Middlesbrough £166,479; Pontypridd £108,754; Swansea £254,014; Central £419,346. Total £1,806,714. These costs were reported in the first two PDS Annual Reports. Individual office costs include refurbishment, furniture, some IT hardware, software, office equipment and security systems. Central costs include purchase of case management system, integration into the Legal Services Commission (LSC) IT network, recruitment and induction.

Assessment of the average cost per case in the PDS is one element of an extensive Methodology (the Methodology Paper can be found at www.legalservices.gov.uk or available on request) developed by the independent research team. The researchers began to collect data at the beginning of the second year of the four-year pilot and are due to report in 2005. A full assessment of average case costs will not be possible until all the research has been completed. In part, this is because the offices need to develop foil caseloads in order for the assessment to be undertaken. All offices began with no clients and full case loads can only be developed over time.

The Department monitors the PDS by way of monthly reports from the LSC on the PDS and regularly meets with the LSC and the researchers. In order to better assess the performance of (he PDS the LSC, with the agreement of Ministers, increased the number of PDS offices from six to eight in 2003. Ministers will make a decision on the future of the PDS in the light of the research at the end of 2005. There are no current plans to open further offices but the Government and the LSC have always said that the PDS provides a flexible option to deliver criminal defence services where existing provision is low, or of poor quality.

Sentencing Policy

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs what recent action has been taken to ensure consistency in sentencing; and what further action is planned. [146072]

Mr. Leslie: The Court of Appeal Criminal Division has issued sentencing guidelines in particular types of cases for over 20 years. They are widely publicised in legal journals and law reports. These decisions are also disseminated by the Judicial Studies Board during its regular seminars.

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 establishes the Sentencing Guidelines Council which will take over the Court of Appeal's present responsibility for issuing sentencing guidelines. Parliament will have a role in considering and scrutinising the draft guidelines drawn up by the Council.

The Council will be chaired by the Lord Chief Justice. It will have seven judicial members, drawn from every tier of court that deals with sentencing in criminal cases, and four non-judicial members (with experience of policing, criminal prosecution, criminal defence and the interests of victims). The Home Secretary will also appoint as an observer a person with experience of sentencing policy and the administration of sentences.

In every individual case, the judge or magistrate will continue to make his or her own decision as to sentence, but will be required to have regard to the Council's guidelines.

Video Equipment

Vera Baird: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs, what system is in place to assess the impact of the quality of video facilities on the relative quality of evidence given in a case. [147669]

Mr. Leslie: An ongoing evaluation of all aspects of Special Measures provisions, including TV links, is being conducted by the Home Office. A report is due to be published by September 2004. Following visits to a number of courts and interviews with witnesses, initial findings have indicated that the new arrangements have been positively received and the quality of equipment is not an issue.

Voter Registration

Mr. Wyatt: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs how many *(a)* asylum seekers and *(b)* illegal immigrants are registered to vote. [148734]

Mr. Leslie: This information is not collected. Such persons are not eligible to register to vote, with the exception that a person from a Commonwealth country

who has leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom and subsequently claims asylum may register to vote until that existing leave ceases.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Buckinghamshire he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149567]

Mr. Flook: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Somerset he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149276]

Mr. Gray: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Wiltshire he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149283]

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what research relating to Surrey he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; [149354]

(2) what research has led him to the conclusion that the optimum suprabrigade structure for the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service is one based on the existing Government Office South East Region. [149359]

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Essex he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149291]

Mr. Syms: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Dorset he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149458]

Mr. Paice: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Cambridgeshire he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149389]

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Surrey he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149394]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government have no plans at present to regionalise the Fire and Rescue service in the constituencies of the hon. Members. Their local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808) made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service, but no referendum is currently planned for any region other than the North East, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside. All local Fire and Rescue Authorities are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

The Government's conclusions about the benefits of a regional approach to the delivery of services are set out in the White Paper, and are informed by a number of reviews of the service, culminating in the report of the Independent Review of the Fire Service published in December 2002. These reports are listed in the White Paper.

Since then, further reports have been published which indicate the benefits of a regional approach. The Mott MacDonald report on the "Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales", published in December 2003, concluded that the optimum solution to secure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of fire and rescue service control rooms would be nine control rooms in England matched to the areas of the Government Offices for the Regions. The Government broadly accepts the conclusions of Mott MacDonald report, and is consulting on implementation. Copies of the report and a related one by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate are available in the Library of the House.

A recent report by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate also concluded that local purchasing arrangements based on individual preferences are not the most efficient means of obtaining goods, services and equipment. A copy of this report is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. John Bercow: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with the Thames Valley Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149566]

(2) what community consultation he has held in Buckinghamshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149568]

(3) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Buckinghamshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149569]

(4) what discussions he has had with Buckinghamshire county council on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service in Buckinghamshire; [149571]

(5) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Buckinghamshire's Fire and Rescue Service. [149573]

Mr. Flook: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Somerset Fire Service; [149270]

(2) what discussions he has had with Somerset county council on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149272]

(3) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Somerset on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149274]

(4) what community consultation he has held in Somerset on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149275]

(5) what discussions he has had with the Avon and Somerset Police Authority on plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149277]

Mr. Gale: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with *(a)* Kent county council and *(b)* the Kent Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149300]

(2) what community consultation he has held in Kent on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149301]

Mr. Gray: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what community consultations he has held in Wiltshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149284]

(2) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Wiltshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149285]

(3) what discussions he has had with *(a)* Wiltshire county council and *(b)* Wiltshire Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149287]

(4) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Wiltshire's Fire and Rescue Service. [149289]

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Surrey on his plans to regionalise the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; and what the conclusions of those discussions were; [149352]

(2) what community consultation he has held in Surrey on his plans to regionalise the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; [149353]

(3) what discussions he has had with the Surrey Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; [149355]

(4) what discussions he has had with Surrey county council on his plans to regionalise the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; [149357]

(5) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Surrey's Fire and Rescue Service. [149358]

Mr. Paice: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with Cambridgeshire county council on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149370]

(2) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Cambridgeshire's Fire and Rescue Service; [149372]

(3) what discussions he has had with the Cambridgeshire Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149388]

(4) what community consultation he has held in Cambridgeshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149390]

(5) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Cambridgeshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was. [149391]

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what community consultation he has held in Essex on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149292]

(2) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time fire-fighters in Essex on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149293]

(3) what discussions he has had with *(a)* Essex county council and *(b)* Essex Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149295]

(4) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Essex Fire and Rescue Service. [149297]

Mr. Syms: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with the Dorset Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149457]

(2) what public consultation he has held in Dorset on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149459]

(3) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Dorset on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149460]

(4) what discussions he has had with local authorities in Dorset on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149461]

(5) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Dorset Fire and Rescue Service. [149463]

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with the Surrey Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149374]

(2) what discussions he has had with Surrey county council on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149375]

(3) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time firefighters in Surrey on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149376]

(4) what community consultation he has held in Surrey on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149377]

(5) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Surrey's Fire and Rescue Service. [149396]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government have no plans at present to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service in the constituencies of the hon. Members. Their local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808) made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service, but no referendum is currently planned for any region other than the north east, the north west and Yorkshire and Humberside. All local Fire and Rescue Authorities are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, regional

management boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

The Government are currently consulting on their draft National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service. Those to whom the document has been sent include the chairs of individual fire authorities, the Local Government Association and a wide range of bodies representing both retained and full time staff. Police authorities have not been specifically consulted, but comments from all stakeholders are invited by 12 March 2004.

In addition, all aspects of fire modernisation are discussed when we meet interested parties from time to time in the course of our ministerial duties. Chief and assistant chief fire officers from nearly all the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Great Britain attended the 3 December 2003 Fire and Rescue Service seminar addressed by myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Corby; and officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are engaged in a rolling programme of visits to local Fire and Rescue Services to discuss the draft National Framework.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what change in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Buckinghamshire; [149570]

(2) what estimate he has made of the change in job numbers in Buckinghamshire's Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149574]

Mr. Flook: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what estimate he has made of the number of job losses in the Somerset Fire Service which will result from the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service; [149269]

(2) what reduction in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Somerset. [149273]

Mr. Gale: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what change in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Kent. [149299]

Mr. Gray: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what change in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Wiltshire; [149286]

(2) what estimate he has made of the change in job numbers in Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149290]

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what estimate he has made of the job losses in Surrey Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service; [149356]

(2) what reduction in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. [149361]

Mr. Paice: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what reduction in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Cambridgeshire; [149369]

(2) what estimate he has made of the job losses in Cambridgeshire as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149373]

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what change in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex; [149294]

(2) what estimate he has made of the change in the number of jobs in Essex Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149298]

Mr. Syms: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the job losses in Dorset Fire and Rescue Service consequent upon the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149456]

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what reduction in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Surrey; [149393]

(2) what estimate he has made of job losses in Surrey Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149397]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government has no plans at present to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service in the constituencies of the hon. Members. Their local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808) made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service, but no referendum is currently planned for any region other than the North East, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside. All local Fire and Rescue Authorities are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

Under the Regional Management Board arrangements, staff numbers will continue to be a matter for the individual Fire and Rescue Authority employers concerned.

Mr. Bercow: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Buckinghamshire without the consent of Buckinghamshire County Council. [149572]

Mr. Flook: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Somerset without the consent of Somerset Fire Service. [149271]

Mr. Gray: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Wiltshire without the consent of Wiltshire County Council. [149288]

Mr. Hammond: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service without the consent of Surrey County Council. [149351]

Mr. Paice: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Cambridgeshire without the consent of Cambridgeshire County Council. [149371]

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex without the consent of Essex County Council. [149296]

Mr. Syms: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Dorset. [149462]

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Surrey without the consent of Surrey County Council. [149395]

Mr. Raynsford: The Government have no plans at present to regionalise the Fire and Rescue service in the constituencies of the hon. Members. Their local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808) made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service, but no referendum is currently planned for any region other than the North East, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside. All local Fire and Rescue Authorities are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

I hope these voluntary arrangements will succeed. There are, however, provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Bill currently before the House to strengthen and streamline the power that already exists, in section 6 of the Fire Services Act 1947, to combine Fire and Rescue Authorities following consultation with the existing authorities and other persons affected.

David Davis: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Humberside he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149587]

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what reseach relating to Cheshire he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149415]

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what research relating to Humberside he has commissioned to provide the evidential basis for his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149401]

Mr. Raynsford: The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808) made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service. Until this occurs, local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. They are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

The Government's conclusions about the benefits of a regional approach to the delivery of services are set out in the White Paper, and are informed by a number of reviews of the service, culminating in the report of the Independent Review of the Fire Service published in December 2002. These reports are listed in the White Paper.

Since then, further reports have been published which indicate the benefits of a regional approach. The Mott MacDonald report on the "Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales", published in December 2003, concluded that the optimum solution to secure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of fire and rescue service control rooms would be nine control rooms in England matched to the areas of the Government Offices for the Regions. The government broadly accepts the conclusions of Mott MacDonald report, and is consulting on implementation. Copies of the report and a related one by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate are available in the Library of the House.

A recent report by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate also concluded that local purchasing arrangements based on individual preferences are not the most efficient means of obtaining goods, services and equipment. A copy of this report is available in the Library of the House.

David Davis: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what community consultation he has held in Humberside on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149588]

(2) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time fire-fighters in Humberside on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149589]

(3) what discussions he has had with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149591]

(4) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service; [149594]

(5) what discussions he has had with the Humberside Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149600]

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise Cheshire's Fire and Rescue Service; [149409]

(2) what discussions he has had with Cheshire County Council on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149411]

(3) what discussions he has had with the Cheshire Police Authority on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149416]

(4) what discussions he has had with *(a)* retained and *(b)* full-time fire-fighters in Cheshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; and what their advice was; [149413]

(5) what community consultation he has held in Cheshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service. [149414]

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what community consultation he has held in Humberside and East Yorkshire on his plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service; [149402]

(2) whom he has consulted on the plans to regionalise the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. [149403]

Mr. Raynsford: The White Paper, "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808), made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly, there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service. Until this occurs, local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. They are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level. Our intention is that voters in the three northern regions should have an opportunity this autumn to vote in a referendum on whether they wish to establish an Elected Regional Assembly for their region.

The Government are currently consulting on their draft National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service. Those to whom the document has been sent include the Chairs of individual Fire Authorities, the Local Government Association and a wide range of bodies representing both retained and full time staff. Police authorities have not been specifically consulted, but comments from all stakeholders are invited by 12 March 2004.

In addition, all aspects of fire modernisation are discussed when we meet interested parties from time to time in the course of our ministerial duties. Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers from nearly all the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Great Britain attended the 3 December 2003 Fire and Rescue Service seminar addressed by myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Corby; and officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are engaged in a rolling programme of visits to local Fire and Rescue Services to discuss the draft National Framework.

David Davis: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what change in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Humberside; [149590]

(2) what estimate he has made of the change in job numbers in the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149593]

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what estimate he has made of the job losses in Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service; [149408]

(2) what reduction in the number of managerial jobs he expects to result from the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Cheshire. [149412]

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the job losses in Humberside, including east Yorkshire, as a result of the proposed regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. [149400]

Mr. Raynsford: The White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808) made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service. Until this occurs, local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. They are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

Under the Regional Management Board arrangements, staff numbers will continue to be a matter for the individual Fire and Rescue Authority employers concerned. Where Regional Fire and Rescue Authorities are established, staff numbers will similarly be a matter for the new body. But a reduction in the number of individual Fire and Rescue Authorities is expected to lead to a reduction in the number of senior posts.

David Davis: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Humberside without the consent of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council. [149592]

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister under what powers he would implement the regionalisation of the Fire and Rescue Service in Cheshire without the consent of Cheshire County Council. [149410]

Mr. Raynsford: The White Paper, "Our Fire and Rescue Service" (Cm 5808), made clear that where voters choose to have an Elected Regional Assembly, there will be a Regional Fire and Rescue Service. Until this occurs, local Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be responsible for the service. They are, however, expected to establish, by 1 April 2004, Regional Management Boards to deliver the functions which are most efficiently and effectively performed at a regional level.

I hope these voluntary arrangements will succeed. There are, however, provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Bill currently before the House to strengthen and streamline the power that already exists, in section 6 of the Fire Services Act 1947, to combine Fire and Rescue Authorities following consultation with the existing authorities and other persons affected.

Provision for the establishment of a Regional Fire and Rescue Authority following a 'yes' vote in a referendum will be included in the proposed English Regional Assemblies Bill, a draft of which we will do our best to publish before the referendums in autumn 2004.

House Fire Deaths

Mrs. Iris Robinson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many deaths from house fires there were in the United Kingdom in 2003. [148841]

Mr. Raynsford: The latest information available is for the calendar year 2002. The provisional UK figure for the number of deaths in dwelling fires in that period is 443. Of the 443 deaths in dwelling fires reported to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by Fire and Rescue Services in the UK in 2002, 364 were in accidental dwelling fires. This was 71 fewer than in 2001. Deaths in dwelling fires are now 21 per cent. below the level reported in 1997, and are the lowest on record.

Housing

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much social housing grant was spent by *(a)* the Housing Corporation and *(b)* local authorities in each region in *(i)* 2001–02 and (ii) 2002–03. [149404]

Keith Hill: Social housing grant (SHG) spent through the Housing Corporation's approved development programme (ADP) and local authority social housing grant (LASHG) for each region in 2001–02 and 2002–03 is tabled as follows:

£ million

	2001–02		*2002–03*	
	ADP	*LASHG*	*ADP*	*LASHG*
London	341.5	112.5	423.9	119.9
South East	93.5	140.9	113.1	186.2
South West	51.1	58.2	62.4	68.3
East	51.6	58.7	62.5	15.2
East Midlands	34.4	12.7	39.5	72.4
West Midlands	58.5	15.2	64.6	19.6
Yorkshire & Humberside	47.7	3.3	49.2	6.2
North East	23.2	0.5	22.4	0.8
North West	51.6	7.0	57.5	7.5
Merseyside	21.4	1.4	24.8	3.0
Total	774.6	410.4	919.9	499.2

Source:
Housing Corporation

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many social housing units were built with social housing grants by *(a)* the Housing Corporation, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* registered social landlords without public subsidy, in each year since 1990. [149405]

Keith Hill: Estimates of the number of new social housing dwellings provided each year since 1991–2 are tabled as follows:

Financial year	*Number of social housing units built or otherwise acquired by RSLs with public subsidy Column A*	*Number of social units built by Las with public subsidy Column B*	*Number of units built by RSLs without public subsidy Column C*
1991–2	29,525	7,113	N a
1992–3	68,192	2,579	1,126
1993–4	64,834	1,451	1,137
1994–5	70,720	853	815
1995–6	69,397	757	1,964
1996–7	53,840	451	1,449
1997–8	49,258	323	2,434
1998–9	43,141	194	2,200
1999–2000	34,373	102	2,964
2000–1	31,339	389	3,495
2001–2	30,605	80	3,699
2002–3	31,074	271	2,995

Notes:
1. The figures in column A relate to the number of social dwellings acquired by RSLs with public subsidy – including new build. Separate figures on RSL new build are not available.
2. The types of dwellings shown include self-contained dwellings and bedspaces.

Data *Sources:*
Column A: Housing Corporation Stewardship Reports, Approved Development Programme, Local Authority Sponsored Programme, Revenue Grants & Voted Expenditure
Column B: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, P2 returns from Local Authorities
Column C: Housing Corporation, Regulatory and Statistical Return

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he intends to publish *(a)* Table S127 (A1.24) Difference from the Bedroom Standard by Tenure, *(b)* Table S132 (A1.29) Trends in Difference from the Bedroom Standard 1984 to 2001–02 and *(c)* Table S140 (A9.6) Difference from the Bedroom Standard by Government Office Region from the Survey of English Housing 2001–02. [149406]

Yvette Cooper: All of these tables have already been published on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website and they are available in the Library of the House. It is not intended to publish them in a printed report.

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tewkesbury of 3 November 2003, *Official Report*,

column 501W, on the tenancy deposit scheme, what the outcome was of the seminar held in December to discuss the case for linking legislation for compulsory measures to protect tenancy deposits to the Law Commission's findings. [149434]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is pleased to say that the seminar held on 19 December achieved a good attendance from those representing landlords, tenants, local authorities and housing professionals. It appeared to achieve a widespread understanding among those attending of the need to steer a course that considered the scope for linking legislation for compulsory measures to protect tenancy deposits to a need for written agreements for all tenants. A need for all tenants to have written agreements was proposed in the Law Commission's report 'Renting Homes' published in November.

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will place in the Library copies of the papers presented at the seminar held in December to discuss the case for linking legislation for compulsory measures to protect tenancy deposits to the Law Commission's findings. [149435]

Keith Hill: With the approval of their authors the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will do so.

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will introduce a statutory national tenancy deposit scheme. [149436]

Keith Hill: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is considering in the light of the seminar of 19 December a full response to our consultation a year ago with the results of our consideration of proposals for future measures to provide for tenancy deposit protection that could encompass a range of approved but mandatory schemes.

Ms Oona King: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what account his Department asked the Law Commission to take of the issue of protecting tenancy deposits as part of its project on tenure reform; and what evidence the Law Commission requested from consultees on this issue. [149437]

Keith Hill: The Law Commission consultation paper 162 of May 2002 stated in paragraph 1.85 that:

"The question of whether or not tenancy deposits should be regulated, and if so how—an issue covered in the legislation of many Commonwealth jurisdictions 38—is not considered here. It is currently the subject of pilot projects being run by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions."

In the Law Commission's interim response to this consultation, their paper 284 of November 2003 stated in paragraph 2.27 that:

"During the period of our consultation, we were aware that schemes relating to tenancy deposits were being tested and evaluated by ODPM. In 2003, the outcome of this evaluation was produced. It has become clear that policy makers see considerable potential for building contractual obligations relating to the taking and repayment of deposits into the scheme we are proposing, even though we did not consider the issue as part of our project."

Further on in that report, in a footnote to paragraph 8.14 on key terms it is stated:

"We have considered whether we should recommend that the Secretary of State include in the secondary legislation a default term about whether fixtures and chattels are included in the agreement and whether an inventory must be provided. This issue ties in closely with work ODPM are doing on the regulation of deposits (as disputes are often about the existence or state of items which could have been listed in an inventory to avoid disputes). We do not wish to prejudge that work by proposing that there should be a compulsory minimum term on this issue in the Act."

Following the seminar on 19 December we are considering with the Law Commission how proposals for future provisions on the safeguarding of tenancy deposits could mesh in with what the Law Commission are proposing with regard to compulsory written agreements for all tenants.

Mr. Love: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment of the possible potential savings to health and social care budgets he has made from ensuring that a percentage of all new housing has wheelchair access; and if he will make a statement. [149609]

Yvette Cooper: All newly built homes must meet the requirements of Tart M' of the building regulations, which the Government revised in 1999 to improve the visitibility and convenience of new housing. The revised regulations include requirements to ensure that entrances, lifts, corridors, doorways and WCs are accessible, including to wheelchair users. The provisions are expected to enable occupants to cope better with reducing mobility and to live longer in their own homes, although not necessarily to facilitate folly independent living for all disabled people.

In addition, all new build schemes funded by the Government through the Housing Corporation must comply with the Corporation's scheme development standards, which adopt additional criteria for accessibility and internal environments.

No assessment has been made of the potential costs and benefits of setting a target for a proportion of all new housing to have particular standards of wheelchair access.

Mr. Love: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what measures the Department will take to increase the number of new houses suitable for those who are wheelchair users. [149610]

Yvette Cooper: All newly built homes must currently meet the requirements of 'Part M' of the building regulations, which the Government revised in 1999 to improve the visitibility and convenience of new housing. The revised regulations include requirements to ensure that entrances, lifts, corridors, doorways and WCs are accessible, including to wheelchair users. The provisions are expected to enable occupants to cope better with reducing mobility and to live longer in their own homes, although not necessarily to facilitate fully independent living for all disabled people.

In addition, all new build schemes funded by the Government through the Housing Corporation must comply with the Corporation's scheme development standards which adopt additional criteria for accessibility and internal environments.

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his policy on the building of houses on flood plains. [149919]

Keith Hill: Policy is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 25: Development and Flood Risk, published in July 2001.

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what discussions he has had with planning inspectors about the building of houses in flood plains; and if he will make a statement. [149920]

Keith Hill: Officials at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have briefed Planning Inspectors on the policies dealing with housing and flooding out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes 3 (Housing) and 25 (Development and Flood Risk). They also provide on request advice to the Inspectorate centrally and to individual Inspectors on questions about the policy stated in these documents, but not on the interpretation of policy in cases.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether local planning authorities can refuse new housing applications in areas where *(a)* sewage and *(b)* flooding problems are known to exist. [150017]

Keith Hill: Problems with sewage and flooding are material considerations in whether nor not to approve new housing applications, and local planning authorities should refuse permission where these cannot be satisfactorily resolved. Guidance on sewerage is given in paragraph 19 of Annex 3 to Planning Policy Guidance Note 23: Planning and Pollution Control. The fact that flood risk is a criterion in allocating land in plans for housing development is stated in paragraph 31 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing, and the suitability of land at different levels of risk from flooding for residential development is set out in Table 1 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 25: Development and Flood Risk.

Local Government

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the value of the formula spending share for *(a)* each older person and *(b)* each older person for deprivation is for each local authority in 2004–05. [150069]

Mr. Raynsford: Older people form part of the population figures used to calculate several of the formula spending shares (FSS) formula, the exceptions being the education formulae and the children and younger adults social service formulae. Specific provision for older people is made in the FSS formula for older peoples social services.

The figures in the table detail the FSS and the deprivation top up per older person for the older peoples social services FSS for each social services/education authority, as announced in the 2004–05 provisional local government finance on 19 November 2003. The figures are taken from the 'Simple Presentation' guide to the funding formulae, which is available on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website at http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/finance/0405/simppres/index.htm

	Per person aged 64 +	
	Older peoples PSS FSS (£)	*Deprivation top-up(£)*
Greater London		
City of London	1,250.33	214.72
Camden	1,309.32	401.91
Greenwich	1,127.70	276.75
Hackney	1,605.50	568.80
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,200.62	323.00
Islington	1,477.87	502.90
Kensington and Chelsea	1,007.60	225.88
Lambeth	1,247.17	358.72
Lewisham	1,180.40	310.73
Southwark	1,306.77	385.16
Tower Hamlets	1,594.33	580.19
Wandsworth	1,175.43	310.23
Westminster	1,170.24	315.31
Barking and Dagenham	995.35	341.34
Barnet	814.64	153.88
Bexley	637.91	93.67
Brent	954.02	250.31
Bromley	579.37	58.49
Croydon	695.21	124.45
Baling	918.08	227.65
Enfield	777.32	187.18
Haringey	1,045.02	380.54
Harrow	818.21	152.77
Havering	620.37	107.36
Hillingdon	743.08	128.17
Hounslow	899.35	220.07
Kingston upon Thames	699.56	70.87
Merton	747.16	113.29
Newham	1,244.00	509.94
Redbridge	783.44	191.70
Richmond upon Thames	729.58	91.37
Sutton	712.02	104.05
Waltham Forest	975.41	329.38
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	785.77	299.72
Bury	701.35	240.34
Manchester	1,036.28	460.77
Oldham	783.95	300.79
Rochdale	782.04	305.01
Salford	943.00	412.32
Stockport	626.41	166.45
Tameside	812.00	323.41
Trafford	678.37	198.05
Wigan	817.59	331.12
Merseyside		
Knowsley	975.12	451.14
Liverpool	1,038.01	474.65
Sefton	711.71	243.63
St. Helens	813.46	333.77
Wirral	728.50	256.05
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	805.21	343.56
Doncaster	718.25	272.37
Rotherham	806.30	337.13
Sheffield	827.51	328.44
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	809.58	332.07
Newcastle upon Tyne	863.77	360.07
North Tyneside	730.97	270.63
South Tyneside	816.95	339.55
Sunderland	865.88	393.13

	Per person aged 64 + Older peoples PSS FSS (£)	Deprivation top-up(£)
West Midlands		
Birmingham	909.52	358.32
Coventry	728.03	234.96
Dudley	737.07	249.57
Sandwell	923.57	370.82
Solihull	572.60	110.87
Walsall	836.37	324.78
Wolverhampton	854.15	313.93
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	707.96	247.80
Calderdale	657.33	202.06
Kirklees	674.62	217.90
Leeds	707.10	227.86
Wakefield	790.94	312.02
All purpose authorities		
Bath & North East Somerset	589.70	96.49
Blackburn with Darwen	781.94	328.20
Blackpool	716.53	260.00
Bournemouth	642.01	157.92
Bracknell Forest	704.00	124.22
Brighton & Hove	680.77	187.47
Bristol	795.84	263.46
Darlington	637.33	203.91
Derby	692.93	254.59
East Riding of Yorkshire	557.39	125.02
Halton	856.64	354.30
Hartlepool	765.48	326.05
Herefordshire	566.21	108.42
Isle of Wight Council	572.08	81.67
Kingston upon Hull	867.79	383.55
Leicester	841.05	314.67
Luton	697.80	191.20
Medway	588.58	129.57
Middlesbrough	767.08	318.07
Milton Keynes	775.45	219.09
North East Lincolnshire	641.00	203.41
North Lincolnshire	601.90	163.52
North Somerset	589.65	119.91
Nottingham	821.48	333.59
Peterborough	711.65	213.75
Plymouth	701.82	230.03
Poole	526.16	79.08
Portsmouth	667.97	152.05
Reading	694.81	102.05
Redcar and Cleveland	678.12	246.01
Rutland	482.05	48.40
Slough	829.50	180.84
South Gloucestershire	562.02	99.80
Southampton	696.02	172.86
Southend-on-Sea	662.31	175.38
Stockton-on-Tees	665.64	230.24
Stoke-on-Trent	790.19	322.14
Swindon	630.16	161.57
Telford and the Wrekin	746.18	272.90
Thurrock	728.42	184.77
Torbay	651.80	183.78
Warrington	697.92	228.14
West Berkshire	608.91	47.58
Windsor and Maidenhead	609.77	46.08
Wokingham	505.45	0.00
York	529.34	97.87
Isles of Scilly	872.91	43.62
Shire counties		
Bedfordshire	624.41	127.35
Buckinghamshire	609.21	70.88
Cambridgeshire	621.59	119.84
Cheshire	606.21	139.42
Cornwall	607.63	149.60
Cumbria	637.52	178.85
Derbyshire	698.16	237.86
Devon	545.11	89.94
Dorset	467.15	27.82
Durham	801.57	331.81
East Sussex	524.95	58.11
Essex	599.47	118.99
Gloucestershire	575.49	102.39
Hampshire	522.13	46.62
Hertfordshire	695.38	137.97
Kent	579.19	103.65
Lancashire	626.52	190.49
Leicestershire	540.27	98.80
Lincolnshire	549.66	120.10
Norfolk	552.13	106.54
North Yorkshire	541.03	98.20
Northamptonshire	629.34	155.17
Northumberland	667.33	208.86
Nottinghamshire	617.79	175.61
Oxfordshire	632.61	90.29
Shropshire	624.37	160.28
Somerset	554.02	98.00
Staffordshire	625.36	183.52
Suffolk	573.68	120.69
Surrey	601.93	33.40
Warwickshire	639.95	155.15
West Sussex	531.18	41.37
Wiltshire	564.68	82.60
Worcestershire	600.19	150.01

Sustainable Communities

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many houses have been built under plans for the development of the *(a)* Milton Keynes, *(b)* Ashford and *(c)* Stansted Corridor Sustainable Communities; how many are social housing; how many houses will be built; and how many will be social housing. [148204]

Yvette Cooper: The Sustainable Communities plan was published in February 2003. The most recent annual housebuilding figures for the districts contained within the housing growth areas are for the year to September 2003.

Growth Area	*New build housing completions year to September 2003*
Milton Keynes South Midlands	6,622
London Stansted Cambridge	4974
Ashford	678

It should be noted that these figures are for new build only and do not include net additions to the housing stock derived from conversions and change of use less demolitions. Full net additions data for 2003–04 will be available in October 2004.

Plans are at a different stage in each of the three growth areas. In Milton Keynes South Midlands, regional partners published a draft Sub Regional Strategy on 18 July 2003. This sets out plans for around 133,400 homes in the period 2001–16. These plans will be subject to examination in public and the

consideration of the Secretary of State before incorporation into Regional Planning Guidance. Similarly, in July 2003, the South East England Regional Assembly published their proposed alterations to Regional Planning Guidance for Ashford, including a total of 13,100 homes in the period 2001–16. An examination in public was held in December 2003, and the panel is due to report in February 2004.

In London Stansted Cambridge, plans for the growth area are being considered as part of the development of RPG14 for the East of England, and the London Plan, and its Sub Regional Development Frameworks. A first draft of RPG14 is expected to be produced by the East of England Regional Assembly in February 2004.

The Government does not set annual targets centrally for local authorities on either affordable or social housing. Planning policies for affordable housing are set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3, "Housing", and in Circular 6/98, "Planning for Affordable Housing". They advise that where local planning authorities are able to demonstrate a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, based on up-to-date surveys and other data, they should indicate in their local plan how many affordable homes need to be provided throughout the plan area, and set indicative targets for specific suitable sites (expressed either as numbers of homes or a percentage of the homes on the site). Local planning authorities should be monitoring their performance against their local plan policies and targets, but this information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Telecoms Companies

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of how much will be paid back to telecommunications companies in respect of appeals against business rates in England and Wales made since the conclusion of the administrative period for the 2000 list. [149195]

Phil Hope: None. The 2000–05 rating lists are still open to appeals by ratepayers against their rateable values. It is for the National Assembly for Wales to comment on the position in Wales.

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many appeals by telecommunications companies in respect of the *(a)* 1995 and *(b)* 2000 list valuations remain outstanding. [149205]

Phil Hope: At the end of 2003, the numbers of outstanding appeals in England for telecommunication properties on a) the 1995–2000 lists and b) the 2000–05 lists were respectively a) 1,013 and b) 11,248. These figures include both telecommunication properties on the central rating list (in respect of which payments of rates are made direct to my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister), and properties such as telecommunication masts, telephone kiosks, telephone exchanges on the local rating lists (where payments are made to local authorities, and then forwarded by them to my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister).

In the case of Wales, it is matter for the National Assembly for Wales.

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- All headings are in one word-by-word alphabetical sequence, with Members' contribution entries distinguished from other entries by italics.
- Where a Member contributes to Parliamentary business and is the subject of Parliamentary business there are separate contribution and subject entries, the subject entry coming first.
- Entries beginning 'Mac' and 'Mc' are sorted in one sequence as 'Mac'.
- 'St', when abbreviated for Saint, is filed as 'Saint'.
- Numbers are filed as if spelt out, e.g. '10 Downing Street' as if 'Ten Downing Street'.

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- The names of some types of Parliamentary business whenever they occur in Hansard. These are 'Ministerial statements', 'Business statements', 'Opposition days' and 'Estimates days'.

ARRANGEMENT

- All headings are in one word-by-word alphabetical sequence, with Members' contribution entries distinguished from other entries by italics.
- Where a Member contributes to Parliamentary business and is the subject of Parliamentary business there are separate contribution and subject entries, the subject entry coming first.
- Entries beginning 'Mac' and 'Mc' are sorted in one sequence as 'Mac'.
- 'St', when abbreviated for Saint, is filed as 'Saint'.
- Numbers are filed as if spelt out, e.g. '10 Downing Street' as if 'Ten Downing Street'.

HEADINGS

Choice of headings

- *Specificity*—Entries summarise the overall content of a debate or question as specifically as the various POLIS thesauruses allow. For example, 'Education, Higher education, Universities or the name of a particular university is used depending on the breadth of the item.
- *Name headings*—Specific entries are included for the names of people, places, institutions, organisations, committees, programmes, initiatives, publications and legislation when these constitute the overall subject of an item.
- *Organisations and subjects*—Organisation entries are preferred for material about the general performance, administration and staffing of an organisation (for example, United Kingdom Passports Agency, Standards). Subject entries are preferred for what organisations do as part of their duties (for example, Passports, Fees and charges).

Geographical coverage

- *Subject headings*—Subject headings are assumed to refer to the whole of England, Great Britain or the United Kingdom unless otherwise stated.
- *Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales*—Material relating to the whole of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales is indexed under these headings.
- *Places within the UK*—Material about specific towns, areas and institutions is entered under the name of the specific town, area or institution.
- *Foreign countries*—Most material relating to foreign countries is collected under the name of that country. Some additional material may be found under the names of—groups of countries, areas within countries, geographical features, place names associated with particular issues, politicians and heads of state, international bodies, and institutions and companies operating in those countries.
- *EC/EU material*—General material about the European Communities and European institutions as bodies is entered under 'European Communities' and 'EC institutions'. Organisational material about specific communities and institutions is entered under the name of the body, for example 'European Coal and Steel Community' or 'European Parliament'. Material about what the Communities and institutions are doing or propose to do is entered under various subject headings beginning 'EC' such as 'EC environmental policy'.

Parliamentary material and business

- *Material about Parliament*—This is indexed under 'Parliament', the names of the two Houses, the 'Palace of Westminster' and parts of the Parliamentary estate (such as 'Portcullis House').
- *Committees*—Material about committees is indexed under 'Committees', types of committee (such as 'Select committees') and the names of individual committees (such as 'Home Affairs Select Committee').
- *Parliamentary proceedings/procedures*—Material discussing these is indexed under the specific type of proceeding (such as 'Parliamentary questions' or 'Oral questions'), procedure (such as 'Calling of Members') or issue (such as 'Unparliamentary expressions').
- *Legislation*—Entries for Parliamentary proceedings on bills and statutory instruments are entered under their titles. Where the lead word of the bill or statutory instrument does not provide a full or clear indication of the subject there are additional subject entries when the bill or instrument is debated. For example, debates on the 'Child Support Pensions and Social Security Bill' have entries under 'Pensions' and 'Social security benefits' as well as under the title of the Bill.
- *Members' names*—These are given in the form by which the Member prefers to be known.
- *Speaker and Chair*—Contributions by the Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker and deputies'. Contributions from the chair during Committees of the Whole House are brought together under 'Chairman of Committee of the Whole House'. Significant rulings and statements (as opposed to routine comments) are indicated by the sub-heading 'Rulings and statements' in both cases.

Guidance on headings

- *Cross references*—'See' references indicate all the material has been entered under another heading. 'See also' references indicate that additional information may be found under another heading.
- *Concept thesaurus*—A copy of the subject thesaurus to POLIS, listing the concept entries used in the index, is available on the Parliamentary website. A hard copy is available from the Head of the POLIS Unit, House of Commons Library, 1 Derby Gate, London, SW1A 2DG (020 7219 6456).

REFERENCES

- References in the indexes are to columns rather than pages.
- References to debates, but not questions, are accompanied by the date of the item.
- There are separate sequences in Hansard for the material taken on the floor of the House, Westminster Hall sittings, written statements and written questions:
  - References consisting of a number by itself indicate material taken on the floor of the House.
  - References ending in 'wh' indicate Westminster Hall sittings.
  - References ending in 'ws' indicate written statements.
  - References ending in 'w' indicate written questions.
- References under all headings except the names of Members contributing to Parliamentary business and the titles of legislation are listed in one numerical sequence irrespective of whether the material is taken on the floor of the House, is discussed at a Westminster Hall sitting, is a written statement or is a written question.
- References under the names of Members contributing to Parliamentary business and the titles of legislation are listed in numerical sequence under the following headings:
  - *Chamber Debates* (which includes interventions and points of order as well as significant contributions to debates);
  - *Westminster Hall Debates* (covering all debates held as part of the Westminster Hall sittings);
  - *Written Statements* (consisting of ministerial statements issued in writing); and
  - *Questions* (which includes all written, oral and urgent questions).

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in connection with the progress of bills:

- 1R = First reading
- 2R = Second reading
- Com = Committee stage
- Rep = Report stage
- 3R = Third reading
- res = resolution
- amendt(s) = amendment(s)
- * = matter taken formally without debate or division
- (HL) = Bill starting in House of Lords
- (SP) = Bill in Scottish Parliament.

Parliamentary background

- The Parliamentary website at http://www.parliament.uk contains a range of information about Parliament and the full text of some Parliamentary papers and proceedings including Hansard.
- Information on current Parliamentary business is provided in the House of Commons Information Office *Weekly Information Bulletin*, available on the website and from The Stationery Office (020 7873 8499).
- Further information on Parliamentary proceedings and procedures is available from the House of Commons Information Office (020 7219 4272).

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